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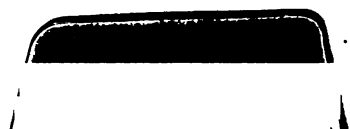
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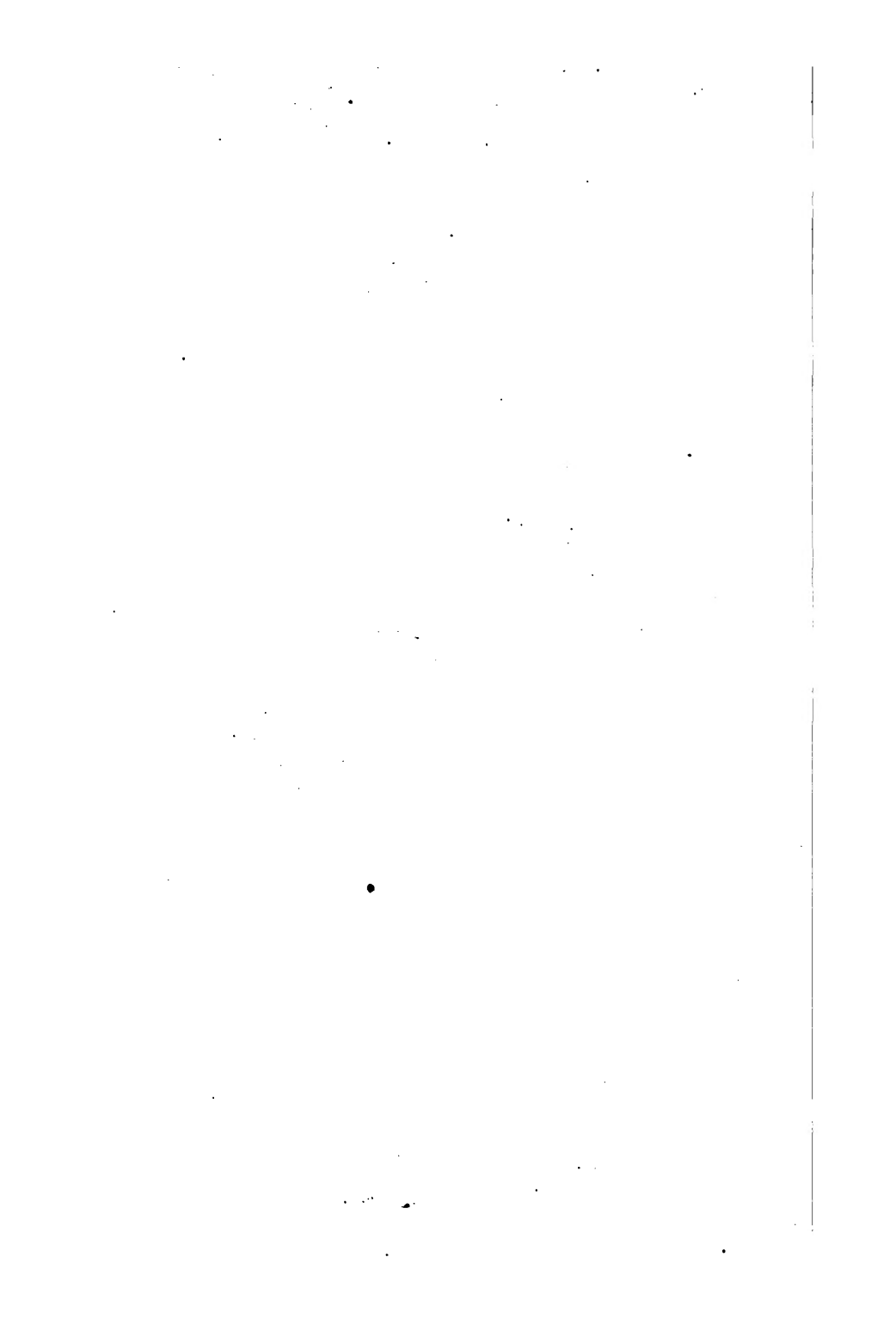
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THE QUEEN'S LIEGES.



THE
QUEEN'S LIEGES.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

"The poetry of those days was acted more than uttered, it was the every-day routine of a life spent in vivid contrast of the passions, hair-breadth escapes, and desperate accidents, or in the seclusion of a rude domestic or monastic contentment."—Kno.

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CHAPTER I.

“ Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon,
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide !”
Paradise Lost.

ENDEAVOUR, gentle reader, to transport thyself in imagination, from the trim and well-tilled fields of thy native England, to the far-off plains of old Castile, in the midst of which our narrative must commence. No matter that near five centuries have elapsed since the events it embraces occurred, for neither time nor the hand of man hath materially changed the aspect of those sterile wastes. Then, as now, they presented to

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the eye a monotonous and wearying expanse, unbroken by hill or valley, unsheltered from the hot rays of the sun by grove or solitary tree; and imparted to the mind something of that solemn and mysterious melancholy, which we feel when gazing on the unvarying surface of the ocean. Then, too, might be seen the distant herdsman, with his long and tapering pike, either standing motionless as the solitary trunk of a blasted pine, whilst his flock fed or reposed around him; or patiently guiding them in quest of the clear stream beside which they might repose till the return of the evening breezes. And occasionally the long train of an arriero appeared, slowly winding along the accustomed mule-track, like the caravan of an eastern desert; not only breaking the monotony of the scene, but awaking also in those wide solitudes (like the far-off bark dimly descried amidst the heaving waves), an emotion never known amidst the bustle of busy and stirring life.

Happy they who can so time their journey

across those central plains, as to reach, ere the fervid hour of noon, some sheltering grove or shaded valley; where, beside the limpid stream to which it owes its verdure, they may open the condessa and partake of their welcome meal; or folded in ample cloaks, enjoy the calm siesta, whilst the weary mules crop the green herbage, or recline in grave thoughtfulness around them. But such had not been the good fortune of those whom we now introduce to our readers. Although a very small party, they had, contrary to the custom of the time and place, disdained, apparently, the guidance of the experienced arriero, and taking a course far more independent than secure, were pushing at a sharp pace over the very heart of the plain. The hour of the siesta was unregarded by them, and though the heat of the autumnal noon was greatly lessened by the elevation of those wide table-lands, situated as they are three hundred toises* above the sea; even so, nought but the direst necessity could

* Above 1,900 feet.

justify the recklessness with which they braved the intense rays of an unclouded sun.

The chief individual of this adventurous party was a stately knight, accoutred in complete armour, composed of plates of burnished steel. His helmet was unadorned, and its volant piece being raised revealed a countenance on which time had set his seal. But though the bleached hair and wrinkled brow betokened declining vigour, there was a fire in his deep-set eye, and a gallant bearing in his carriage, which indicated the power to make a stout resistance if his way were interrupted; and the lance in rest, the ready mace at the saddle-bow, as well as the complete defensive armour of himself and steed, hinted that his knightly prowess might perhaps be proved. Often was his eye cast anxiously around, and fixed at times with impatient wistfulness on the silvery peaks of a distant sierra, now just appearing above the horizon. His gauntleted hand governed a powerful war-horse, which was covered h dusty evidence of long

travel ; but the elastic limbs of the noble animal displayed no weariness, for only by a tight rein was he restrained from outstripping the pace of a beautiful jennet that cantered by his side.

Striking indeed was the contrast between the delicate limbs of the latter, and the muscular proportions of the destrier, but not greater than that presented by their respective riders ; for it was evidently a female form that the wide and hooded cloak of black serge enveloped, which, though it concealed the age, rank, and personal advantages or disadvantages of the wearer, was unable to deprive her of that gracefulness of motion and outline, which no robes can confer nor take away. Seated on a stout palfrey of less symmetrical form, another female, apparently an attendant, followed the pair ; and then came two troopers, wearing plain cuirasses and steel morions, armed with ponderous swords and battle-axes, and, instead of the knightly lance, carrying stout and heavy spears. Each of them held the bridle of a laden sumpter mule, and to

one was entrusted the charge of the knight's deviceless shield. About fifty yards in advance rode another individual, whose armour, greatly superior to that of the troopers, yet varying in many particulars from the knight's glittering mail, denoted the gallant and devoted squire: he was the scout of the party.

Brief conversations were sometimes indulged in by the travellers, when the state of the unbeaten path compelled them to slacken their pace; though silence for the most part accompanied a journey evidently undertaken in haste and apprehension. On one of these occasions, the knight addressing his gentle companion, said, "I begin to think, my child, we might as well have waited for the arriero, and have taken with him the beaten track; these repeated delays will deprive us of all the advantages we had hoped to gain by our shortened route." "But, my father, the chances of being pursued—" murmured a low and musical voice from the folds of the sombre veil. "Ah yes, ah yes! my

wonted impatience blinds me still. I'faith, they will never dream of following the road we have chosen. But perceivest thou not, my love, that if on reaching the foot of yon sierra, we have not time to procure a guide, and ascend the mountain before the arrival of the mule-train, all our exertions may have been fruitless?"

The lady sighed deeply, and the knight giving his steed the rein, soon overtook the man in advance. "How long will it be, Perez," he exclaimed, "ere we reach yon mountain range?"

The keen dark eyes of the person addressed were cast forward with a hasty, calculating glance, and after a moment's pause he replied, "At this pace, señor, we shall scarce reach it before sunset."

"Ah!—such are mine own fears! One clear hour in the mountains before the sun goes down, will be necessary to enable us, even with a skilful guide, to reach the convent of San Martinha ere nightfall." The knight wheeled round his horse, and shouted to the troopers,—“Push on

those lingering mules, their tardy pace delays us all !”

As he gave the order, the lady, who now overtook him, marked his flushed countenance. “O, my father,” she exclaimed, “suffer me to unlace thine helmet ; no sudden danger can assail us whilst we thus command so wide an extent around, and on any alarm thou wilt have ample time to resume it.”

“Thy counsel is good, Inez ; and I confess myself effeminate enough to be thankful of the change.” The ready attendants were immediately at his side, and as the heavy helmet was committed to the care of one of the troopers, and its place supplied by a chaperon or hood of brown silk, lined and slightly trimmed with velvet, the knight observed,—“Surely it must be far more the excitement of my mind than the heat, which, though sultry, makes my brain throb thus painfully. Often have I marched at the head of my troopers beneath a far more burning sun, without heeding its consequences ; and

though some years have since elapsed, I feel scarcely less capable of exertion now than I did then."

The brief delay was more than atoned for by the relief it conferred on the veteran. The travellers once more resumed their journey, but though the mules were urged to their utmost speed, the horses were still compelled to tame down their haughty steps, or leave their less fleet companions far behind.

Once or twice the lady implored her father to fly to the mountains, and leave herself to follow with the attendants, but he would not listen to the proposal; and commending themselves to heaven, they continued to advance at what speed they might.

Another anxious hour, and they had reached the broken and hilly district which extends for some miles at the foot of the sierra; and now the scout, checking his horse, held for a few moments an earnest conference with his lord,—pointing the while towards the mountain range;

the outline of which was now clearly defined before them. They separated,—the squire galloped towards a narrow river that crossed the plain; and the remainder of the travellers avoiding the stream, soon reached a small and stunted wood, through which a sheep-track appeared to wind towards the less sterile portion of the hills. Leaving, for the present, the knight and his scanty train, we follow the fortunes of Perez.

His jaded horse plunging into the little river, bathed, with evident delight, his hot and weary limbs; but brief time was allowed for the welcome refreshment;—he soon gained the further bank, and bounding over the plain, reached a road well beaten, but far too narrow to be mistaken for the *caminos reales*, or highway. Perez knew that it was one of the paths formed by the *arrieros*, or carriers, who (with their long trains of laden mules, and escort of travellers), have for ages made tracks across the vast plains of Spain, which, at a distance, appear not unlike

the runs worn on the side of a mountain by its wild denizens.

Some few yards from the mule-track, stood a small low house, for which the withered bush beside the door claimed the dignity of a posada, or way-side inn. By the open gate of the little path leading to it, sat an aged man, whose face was turned towards the traveller; not, however, to scan him, for his eyes were sightless; but warned by the footsteps of the panting steed, of the approach of a stranger. His venerable head was uncovered, and nearly bald, a few straggling locks alone remaining to mingle with his flowing beard, which, long and full, and white as snow, descended to his girdle. A rosy child was playing beside him with some fresh-culled flowers,—now running here and there to increase his fragrant store; and now exchanging a few lisping words with the aged mendicant. It was the old man's guide, and its eloquent eyes aided his prayer for alms. Neither petitioner seemed familiar with severe privations, nor yet degraded

by the portion allotted to them ; for it was, indeed, no disgraceful doom to meekly submit to the dispensation of Providence, and thankfully receive the dole of those who give to the poor and helpless for the love of God !

As the horseman approached them, the old man took up a threadbare cap, and holding it on his knee, solicited alms. Perez, whose haste admitted of scarce a thought which aided not his mission, replied, “ Perdon usted por Dios hermano* !”

“ Dios guarde à usted† !” humbly replied the beggar, returning his cap to the ground.

On hearing those mild words, the heart of the squire relented, and exclaiming, “ Say a prayer, father, for the success of my present undertaking,” he flung a small coin towards the mendicant. Just then the little child ran laughing from a shaded nook beside the road, where he had just found a store of blooming flowers, and

* “ Excuse me, brother, for the love of God !”

† “ God guard thee !”

in his eagerness to make the old man a sharer in his joy, threw a handful of them towards him : they fell with the dole of Perez into the beggar's once more extended cap.

The traveller smiled, and passed on to the door of the posada. There he alighted ; and having fastened his horse to a post securely fixed near to it for such purposes, entered the low-roofed kitchen, and anxiously inquired for a guide over the sierra.

“ A guide !” exclaimed the shrill voice of a woman, who, as if just roused from her siesta, emerged from an inner room ; and rubbing her scarcely awakened eyes, continued,—“ Thy best guide, señor, would be the brave Sanchez, whose train of mules will pass this way ere nightfall.”

“ He wends his way to the next frontier fort, does he not ?”

“ Aye, sure, does he ; and will reach it too, God willing, in spite of bandalero, contrebandista, or any of the lawless tribes with whom the unsettled times people our sierras !”

"Then will he not suit my purpose," replied Perez, "for I am bound to the holy convent of San Martinha. Knowest thou not some peasant who would, for a bright guerdon, undertake to guide me thither? Methinks there must be many a herdsman among your villagers, who, in tending his flock, hath learned the aspect of the mountain for many a league."

The woman stood for a moment silent, then suddenly called at the door she had just left,—
"Lope, Lope,—come, quick!"

A young embrowned urchin, possessing those shrewd dark eyes and laughing lips that Murillo loved to make immortal, instantly appeared. "Hasten, Lope," said the woman, "to the cottage of old Pedrillo; tell him a stranger needs his guidance over the sierra. He is slow, señor," she continued, turning to Perez, "for he has spent more than sixty summers among these hills; but I remember when the fame of his strength and agility extended far beyond his native village, and even now no one so well as

old Pedrillo knows all the rugged paths of the sierras."

But however much Perez might have desired the experience of the aged herdsman, he felt that the necessity of rapidity in their movements made such a guide worse than useless to his party. Stopping Lope, therefore, who was about to bound away with the fleet step of an untamed colt, to which in shaggy exterior and glance of fire he bore no slight resemblance, he was going to state his difficulty, when a horseman rode hastily to the place.

The new arrival was clad in a style far different from that of the Spanish peasant; to whom, also, his singular and marked features denoted him unallied. Instead of the slouching sombrero of the Spaniard, he wore a turban of dingy yellow, from which long locks of dull black hair strayed in unkempt confusion, and aided his shaggy and overhanging brows in giving additional brightness to his fiery eyes. Broad rings of silver glittered in his ears; and suspended in a

crimson scarf which confined his tawdry vest, appeared, on one side a long-bladed knife or dagger, and on the other, a curved Damascus sword. There was a bend in his carriage, and a furtiveness in his looks, very unlike the erect and manly bearing of the Castilian peasant ; and though at the first glance he might have been taken for some Moorish wanderer, a nearer scrutiny would remove the impression ; for his complexion of deeper hue, and his gaunt and bony frame, deprived him of all resemblance to that gallant but voluptuous race. Perez had no difficulty in guessing him to belong to one of the numerous tribes of Gitani, (or Bohemians, or Gipsies,—such being a few of the names by which that mysterious race is known in various countries), that had of late entered the Peninsula, and formed secure harbourage in its wilds and mountains.

Thinking only of his pressing need, and judging that no likelier person could have offered for his purpose, the squire instantly asked the Gitano

if he knew a way across the mountains to the Convent of San Martinha.

"What if I do?" inquired the other in a surly tone.

"Why, in that case, I can promise thee an ample reward for the slight service of guiding me thither ere nightfall."

"How know'st thou but I have business of my own on hand?"

"Well, well, at least I know that few of thy tribe like to miss a chance of lining the pouch with gold. Now, as I have no time to lose in chaffering, I will promise thee five gold pieces if thou achieve this service."

"Nay, it must be ten, señor,—ten, and no less."

"Thou hast no conscience, knave! five gold pieces would feed thy starveling tribe for a month."

"Who ever gave the Gitano credit for a conscience?" replied the swart wanderer with a

sneer ;—" but my horse is tired, and myself hungry, for I have ridden from Toledo since two hours before noon."

" Ha ! thine must be a fleet steed an' he started at matins,—and lo ! he breathes as calmly as if just led from the pasture. Bah ! bah ! I know thy race well."

" I tell thee," replied the Gitano, and his dark eyes flashed, while his brow assumed a deeper tinge, " we started from Toledo just two hours before noon ! What if my horse be unblown ? he comes of a race that knows not weariness,—is he not of the pure blood of the desert ?"

He uttered these words with an animation the direct reverse of his former calm and scornful bearing, and turning from the threshold he had not yet crossed, went up to his steed, whose broad eye gave him an expressive look of recognition, and patting his arched neck, muttered in a tone which, though low, was distinctly audible : " Thou and I, my Kafac, have had many

such a flight ere now. And, by the soul of my sire ! I thank the alguazils who joined the arriero which left yon city at dawn ; for to them I owe it that we are not still drawling behind those laggard mules. Aye, aye, thou and I will always prefer solitude and the rapid pace that outstrips the wind, to company which those gentry join."

As he thus spoke, he carefully washed the mouth of his beautiful barb, and casting a sidelong look at Perez, continued,—“ Well, señor, how stands our bargain ?”

But the squire had suddenly sprung to horse, and hastily exclaiming,—“ Ten pieces then, if it must be so ; but let us start instantly, in heaven’s name,”—led the way towards the open wicket.

A scarcely perceptible sneer played over the sinister countenance of the Gitano, as without touching the broad shovel-shaped stirrup, (which also answered the purpose of a spur,) he vaulted to his saddle, and followed the impatient Perez ;

•

who, urging his horse to his utmost speed, hurried towards the wood, through which the narrow path taken by the veteran knight wound towards the sierra.

CHAPTER II.

"The sun had sunk, and after him the star
Of Hesperus, whose office is to bring
Twilight upon the earth, short arbiter
'Twixt day and night, and now from end to end
Night's hemisphere hath veil'd th' horizon round."

Paradise Lost.

THE sun is fast descending the western sky, appearing to hasten his course as he nears the bosom of the broad Atlantic; as if, in accordance with the dreams of poesy, seeking repose on ocean's breast after his glorious race. How thankfully doth many a weary head note his downward course—for the hour approaches when its sorrows may be escaped, or its toils suspended,

in the calm forgetfulness of sleep. And many a young heart beats joyfully as it watches the day decline, and welcomes the sweet vesper time, when they meet once more whom day's busy cares have unkindly severed. Some perhaps view with regret the departure of the day that will soon be gone for ever ; but these, how few ! for anticipation hurries on the frail child of time, who is insensible to the value of his greatest treasure, until it is his no more !

With such as regret that the day is closing, must we number the travellers whom in our last chapter we saw hurrying across the sun-burnt plains of Castile. Amidst the long range of hills known by the general name of Sierra de Gata, though in almost every district bearing some distinctive appellation, they were now winding their weary way ; and with no small degree of anxiety watched the gathering shades of evening, which having already enveloped the valleys in gloom, were gradually ascending the mountain side.

The arrangements of their journey were somewhat changed. Owing to the steepness and ruggedness of the way, the utmost speed they could command was a brisk walk, and that sadly at variance with the wishes of their jaded beasts. Some distance before them, in the capacity of guide, rode the wild-looking Gitano, and Perez followed his master, beside whom, wherever the path permitted, the graceful jennet ambled still. The knight had resumed his helmet, and the whole party, admonished by the sharp mountain winds, had thrown capotes or wide hooded cloaks over their armour. The glances which the leader of this little band cast ever and anon around him, were replete with anxiety; and distrustful were the looks with which he regarded the swart and silent guide; at the same time, perhaps unconsciously, laying his glittering lance in rest, or carefully noting that the heavy mace at his saddle-bow was so placed as to be ready on any sudden emergency.

The mountain air grew keen and chill, and as

the last rays of the sun faded from the few light clouds that hovered on the horizon, and the slender crescent of the young moon descended the western sky, the countless stars began to spangle the blue vault of heaven. The jutting rocks and stunted shrubs which the travellers passed, assumed, in the momentarily decreasing light, strange and uncouth forms ;— an oppressive feeling of danger and doubt crept over their hearts, and boding thoughts were read by each in the countenance of his companion. At length the knight, checking his steed, drew up on a spot where the path slightly widened, and motioning his daughter to pass on, joined Perez, whom he addressed in a low tone, as if unwilling to awaken fears in the minds of others : “ The chimes of compline must have long since tolled, yet we have heard no convent bell. In less than an hour night will be upon us. Knowest thou aught of yon varlet ? ”

The knight's troubled countenance reflected the feelings that had long burthened the mind of

Perez ; but with an effort to assume a confidence he was far from enjoying, he stoutly replied,—
“ He was the only guide, señor, whom I could obtain, nor did I find it easy to secure *his* services ; and if it be true, as he said, that a troop of alguazils joined the mule-train that started from Toledo before dawn, we may be thankful that we have yet the use of our own free limbs. As for yon Egyptian dog,—if he dare attempt to play us false, his head shall soon be brainless as a date-stone.” Perez clutched his battle-axe as he spoke, with a look of stern resolve ; but in a moment a deathly pallor overspread his features, and he exclaimed, in an accent of surprise and horror, so startling and apparent as to force a faint scream from the terrified maid, who trembling with a thousand fears rode next behind him,—“ Heaven of mercy ! what do I see ? ” The object which had so shaken the nerves of the stout squire was a rude cross of wood surrounded by a heap of stones, close beside the mountain path,—too

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probably the record of some deed of cruelty and crime.

The lady turned her head on hearing the sudden exclamation, and at once perceiving the cause of the alarm, guided her palfrey to it ; at the same time addressing Perez with a voice in whose gentle tones a slight tremor might perhaps indicate that its calmness was assumed. " This lonely cross," she said, " doth indeed seem to say that a deed of violence has been committed here ; but behold ! the grey lichens which cling around it show that many years have elapsed since the sad outrage was perpetrated. There are, I fear, few roads, good Perez, that have not, at some period, witnessed the fearful deeds of evil men ; but instead of thoughts of terror, that can but avail to embitter our own trial, let us be heedful of the supplication of this humble cross, and offering up a prayer for the hapless sufferer, place our trust in God, and pass cheerfully on our way."

Her hopeful words re-assured the attendants,

the good knight smiled approval of her firmness, and Perez replied, as they resumed their former slow pace :—" In honourable battle, señor, my life were cheerfully bestowed ; but such fate as this memorial betokens chills the veins with horror !" Then resuming his former tone, the conversation which had been for a moment interrupted by the unwelcome object was renewed, and long did the knight and he confer together in low and anxious whispers.

Suddenly the road widened considerably, and, as if they had arrived at some determination, the twain rode abreast in front of their companions, and shouted to the guide, who, without turning his head, checked his steed to enable them to overtake him. " Thou didst promise," said Perez sternly, " to conduct us, ere nightfall, to the convent ;—behold, the evening is growing dark around us, and we have not even heard its distant bell."

" How could I guess," replied the Gitano sullenly, " that I was expected to lead at a snail's pace ?"

"'Tis true,—we *have* been detained by the slow-footed mules," said Perez, looking at the knight, who somewhat re-assured, inquired :

"How long will it yet be ere we reach the holy dwelling?"

"Two hours, at a good brisk rate ; but at the .pace we are now going," he added, with a side-long glance of dark meaning, "I'faith, I know not when."

The sinister expression of his visage was lost on Perez, even if discernible in the dim light, for he had turned to the knight as the latter passionately exclaimed, "How is my child, whose cheek none but summer airs have ever visited, to spend the night on these bleak hills?"

"Such dainty dames would do well not to venture into the wild haunts of the sierra," growled the surly guide. "Had I suspected that I was to be kept here till midnight, I might have hesitated ere quitting yon posada, whence thy squire tempted me."

"What," said Perez, "in defiance of the alguazils, and the broad gold pieces? Come,

come, good Gitano, thou hast no reason to regret thy bargain ; and methinks the will alone is wanting to enable thee to relieve the worst portion of our anxiety. Surely thou must know some herdsman's hut, where the lady and her woman may obtain shelter from the bitter winds. For ourselves, with our wide cloaks around us, and a block of stone for a pillow, we will not task the courtesy of the mountaineer ; many a noble knight hath known worse fare."

"There is worse e'en now, in the dungeons of Toledo," replied the Gitano with a sneer, "where many a gallant noble lacks free limbs and fresh air to boot."

Significant glances were exchanged by Perez and his lord, and the latter exclaimed in a voice of thunder,—“Slave !—an' thou betrayest us, I will essay but one blow, but it shall cleave thee from the crown to the saddle !”

“Strike now, señor,” was the calm reply of the sullen guide ; “I am not afraid to die.”

“Proceed,” replied the knight ; “’tis of no

avail to parley with thee. At the first cliff that interrupts the night breeze stop ; we will there kindle a fire, and, with heaven's protection, spend the night as best we may." The guide advanced : the little group that had in silent dismay awaited the event of the short conference, joined the knight and Perez ; and together they once more resumed their toilsome way.

The darkness which increased each moment rendered their progress yet more slow ; and though the sure-footed mules maintained their fame as mountain pilgrims, the horses frequently stumbled, to the no small alarm and danger of their riders. Even the bluff old knight, who had led the van in many a fierce encounter, shuddered at the revolting idea of rolling with his gallant steed down some unseen precipice, and providing a feast for the birds of prey, who ever and anon startled from their haunts, screamed aloud as they flapped their heavy wings around them.

They had now entered a gorge, or ravine,

formed by winter torrents, or some violent commotion of nature. On each side arose high and ghastly cliffs, all rude, bare, and riven; the scarred brows of which assumed a thousand hideous shapes, as they frowned on the weary and bewildered travellers. Although more fitting lair for the wolf or mountain eagle than for the repose of gentle lady, yet, as they had at least a sure footing, the knight felt half disposed to remain there till morning light; but the bitter night wind rushed through the narrow gully so keen and fierce as to benumb in a few moments each aching limb; and they pressed on, impatient to escape a spot so inhospitable.

On a sudden they overtook their guide, who had come to a pause; and heard with renewed dismay that the most dangerous portion of their way lay before them.

"The ravine ends where I stand, señor, and the road then becomes but a narrow path along the side of the mountain. If the horses may be depended on, I am ready to proceed; but I warn

ye, that one false step will hurl them into the valley below."

If any adverse circumstances could excuse a true knight from cursing his evil destiny, probably those we have narrated might have forced from the traveller some high-sounding oath ; but in an age when a mason was fined by his fellows for such a breach of Christian manners, we may suppose the use of expletives confined to the lawless and dissolute. After a few moments of perplexing thought, he turned to the lady : " What sayest *thou*, my Inez ? the road from this point is perilous ; yet the alternative of passing the night in this wind-trough is scarcely less so to thy tenderly nurtured frame."

The gentle girl, who had drawn her c'cloak closely around her, but nevertheless shivered with excessive cold, hastened to reply.

" Fear not for me, dearest father ; a fire may be easily obtained, and a little warmth is all I need. It would surely be rash to attempt proceeding onward until day-break."

"So be it then," replied the knight; let a fire be instantly made; and perhaps a bota of val de penas may somewhat aid us in keeping at bay this bitter blast."

"If thou proposest reposing here for the night," said the guide, "we will, for the present, señor, part company. I shall not be required till dawn, when I will faithfully rejoin ye."

"Ha! how know we that thou wilt return again?"

"Have I not said I would lead ye to the monastery of Benedictines?"

"Ah, truly,—we were oblivious,—thy *honour* is pledged, gallant sir Gitano,—forgive our doubts; nevertheless, having little faith in thy race, we pray thee take thy rest beside us. Ho! Perez, wheel round thy horse that the knave evade us not:—soh!—*now* we can trust thee."

"Is not my promised gold yet in thy keeping?" asked the guide with bitterness; "what should I gain by quitting ye now?"

"We know not indeed what thou thinkest to

profit by leaving us ; and would gladly be enlightened on a subject, which is at least mysterious. Why art thou not content to avail thyself of our kindling fire ?”

“ Because my dwelling is nigh at hand, señor, and much as I love the pure mountain air during the day, I prefer at night warmth and shelter.”

“ Now, art thou not a discourteous varlet ?” said the knight indignantly. “ Base and ungentle we know are all thy race ; but surely it doth ill beseem even such as thou to leave a noble lady in suffering and peril in this bleak ravine, whilst protected by thy mountain dwelling, thou reposest in warmth and safety !”

“ Nay, señor,” replied the vagrant, “ thou dost me wrong ; hospitality is not so utterly unknown amongst us. Had I dreamed that the lady’s dainty feet would condescend to cross the threshold of the despised Rommany, the offer of its shelter had been made ere now !”

Donna Inez, who listened to this conversation, had, from the first moment of his appearance,

regarded the sinister countenance of the Gitano with extreme distrust ; and having more apprehension of treachery to her father than danger to herself, in trembling tones now spake. "No—no, father ! ask it not ;—far better repose here for a few hours, than be an unwelcome intruder into the humblest dwelling."

Her words, however, defeated her purpose ; for the knight hastily replied,—“Thou art even now palsied with cold, my child ; I can scarcely recognise thy voice. Lead on at once, Gitano ; we accept thy tardy invitation, maugre thy scant courtesy ; and with the less scruple, as our well-stored alforgas will prevent our troubling thee for provender.”

The guide made no reply ; but riding on a few paces, suddenly halted and dismounted. Perez, who followed closely behind him, exclaimed,—“Art thou sure of thy road in this thick darkness ?”

“If I err I shall myself pay the penalty.”

“Well, be not sullen, good Gitano,—give us

but safe shelter for this night, and I will myself add a broad piece to thy guerdon."

"Aye, aye,—'tis 'good Gitano,' 'courteous Gitano,' now that my aid must save your lordly lives; but the danger once past,—'dog,' and 'slave,' and 'base hound,' will be all too good for me."

Thus growling in muttered tones, the Egyptian led his horse up a narrow path that, by a sudden and sharp turn, scaled the very face of the cliff. It was so steep, bare, and slippery, that Perez with the greatest difficulty compelled his weary steed to scramble up it; then leaving him on the summit in charge of the Gitano, he returned to aid those behind. They all dismounted, and with much difficulty and some danger reached the summit of the cliff, which appeared to be a broad steppe in the mountain, from which arose in towering majesty the highest summit of the lofty sierra.

A few paces onward, and they reached the face of the gigantic rock, passed round a mass

of granite which by some powerful agency had been precipitated above, and stood at the mouth of a spacious cavern. It was lighted up by a large fire of pine-wood, which diffused a strong resinous odour around, but the glare of which had been concealed from them until they had attained the cavern, by the immense boulder that stood before its entrance. Several of the gaunt race to whom the guide belonged were distinguished by the light of the flames; and on hearing his voice, two or three of them rushed towards him, muttering hasty words in a strange dialect. Brief, however, was their conversation and turning to the knight, his conductor said,—“ My brethren will take charge of the cattle, señor,—enter and rest.” Perez and the troopers accompanied the wearied beasts; and the remainder of the party, half relieved of their apprehensions by the prospect of warmth and shelter, hastened to avail themselves of the brief invitation.

Donna Inez, as she advanced towards the

blazing hearth, cast an apprehensive glance around her; but her eye encountering the timid countenance of her woman, who, pale and trembling, kept close to her side, she endeavoured to assume the appearance of a confidence which she was far from feeling. "I have heard," she whispered, "that these strange tribes have among them a kind of honour, which ensures respect to those who rely on their protection. Let us not by our distrustful looks, my Sanchiza, deprive ourselves of this security." Endeavouring to give weight to her words by her own example, the lady at once approached the fire; and obeying the gesture of her father, inviting her to share with him a piece of unhewn timber that lay near it, she took her seat beside him. Sanchiza, too, ventured to sit down, but closed her eyes in terror, and strove to murmur a prayer; whilst Inez took an anxious survey of the wild scene and wilder faces around her. The bare walls of the cavern rose to a prodigious height, and in the midst of the spacious area they en-

closed, the stately column of smoke ascended, and spreading like the wide branches of a palm tree against the blackened roof, slowly rolled along its surface in heavy folds, escaping into the open air through some concealed chasm, or imperceptible crevices in the rocky ceiling. Various strange habiliments were hanging around, mingled with numerous offensive weapons, consisting chiefly of pikes, daggers, and curved scymetars. Amongst them appeared also the slight saddle, with its shovel-shaped appendage, serving at once for stirrup and spur; together with gaily ornamented bridles, decked with bosses, amulets, and gaudy tufts of wool. Piles of leathern packages and botas were likewise strewn about the floor, giving the place much the appearance of a haunt of contrabandista. The further end of this vast cave was almost lost in gloom; but the anxious eyes of Donna Inez remarked one or two spots of darker shade than the rest of the rock, and she concluded them to be communications with the innermost recesses of the hollowed

mountain. One rapid glance sufficed to possess the lady with these particulars ; and she turned from the survey to mark with more earnest scrutiny the two Gitani, who, with their late guide, alone, of all whom they had descried at their entrance, remained with the strangers.

The three dark-browed associates stood in low and earnest conference beside the fire ; but though their voices were plainly audible, the language in which they spoke was unintelligible to their guests. Yet Inez strove from the expression of their countenances to glean some hint of the import of their conference, and soon gathered, from the rapid and furtive glances with which they occasionally regarded her father, (who, wrapped in deep thought, appeared unconscious of all around him) that he formed, at least in part, the subject of their animated discourse. It was natural indeed that the guide should be explaining to his friends the untoward circumstances which had introduced visitors into what appeared to be one of their most secret

haunts ; but though this thought occurred to her, Inez continued to watch them heedfully. The countenances of these children of a clime even more southern than that of their adoption, displayed not a single line to invite confidence. An expression of cunning seemed to be the distinguishing mark of the race, only displaced occasionally by a scowl of intense ferocity, which imparted to the small deepset eyes that lurked beneath their lowering brows, a gleam bright as that of glowing coals.

On a sudden one of them, with an almost imperceptible gesture, pointed to the curved blade hanging from his girdle, and cast at the same moment a fierce and significant look at the guide. The latter replied in hurried and energetic tones, raising his hands as if in deprecation ; and when appearing to recollect himself he looked around, seemingly fearful of having been observed and understood, he encountered the expressive and apprehensive gaze of the lady Inez. In the absorbing interest

of the moment, her veil had unobserved fallen down. Fatigue and fear had blanched her lip and cheek, and as (apprehensive of having aroused the anger of the Gitani by the close scrutiny with which she had been regarding them) her glance fell before that of the guide, the graceful curve of her noble brow, and the long lashes of her beautiful eyes were defined with more than usual distinctness on her hueless countenance. At the sight of such exceeding loveliness, which, though robbed of its bloom by anxiety and terror, had lost nothing of its mild dignity; even the half-savage natures of these lawless men appeared softened, and the guide approaching her with a respectful attitude, and endeavouring to soften his rude voice to tones more fitting the ear of a fair and high-born damsel, thus addressed her :—" My brethren, señora, are now informed of the luckless chance that hath driven ye for refuge to our mountain dwelling. In their name I bid

the Spaniard welcome to the poor abode of the houseless Rommany."

Donna Inez murmured her thanks, adding :
—"Since it can wait but a few hours to dawn, and we have abundant provisions in our alforgas, we shall not need to trespass further on the hospitality of thy people, than by sharing this welcome warmth and shelter. But I implore thee—" and the fair hands were clasped, the timid eyes raised, and the soft voice tremulous with eager entreaty,—“if any evil menace my father, address to his safety all the well-known adroitness and cunning of thy race ; thou shalt not lack reward.” There was a meaning in her earnest look, before which the eyes of the Egyptian fell ; but ere he could frame a reply, voices were heard at the entrance of the cavern, and the guide eagerly (as the boding heart of Inez feared) turned away to welcome the party returned from the stables.

It was, however, a great relief to Donna

Inez to behold the stout Perez and the troopers, although they were followed by four times their number of Gitani; but she failed not to mark, that as they seated themselves around the fire, (to which at the same time was brought a supply of fuel), each of the Spaniards was separated from his companions by one or more of their turbaned hosts.

“Who could have thought, whilst creeping along yon bleak ravine,” exclaimed Perez, “that fire and shelter, aye, and good fair stabling for the wearied beasts too, were within reach of a bolt from a cross-bow?”

As he uttered these words of gratulation, he proceeded to unbind the thongs which bound the *alforgas*, and in as short a time as his benumbed fingers would permit, displayed a goodly array of those important comforts, without a due supply of which the outward man soon sets at nought all the courage and fortitude of the most resolved mind. *Botas*, too, were produced, whence flowed the renowned

vintage of the Val-de-peñas, and even the Gitanis were invited to taste of the horn beaker as it passed around the circle. Whilst partaking of the repast, however, Inez continued her ceaseless scrutiny of their hosts, for her mind was still disturbed with apprehensions, which were not the less lively that they appeared to find no place in the bosoms of her companions. Her father smiled as he quaffed to her more suitable lodging, and in his open brow she read no sign of distrust or fear. Perez del Carpera, satisfied with their escape from the dark and unknown road, where unseen dangers lurked at every step, gave himself to the jovial feeling of the moment; and even the timid Sanchiza, reassured by the return of the stalwart attendants, and strengthened by a draught of the delicious wine produced by one of the choicest vintages of Spain, tranquilly partook of the welcome meal.

CHAPTER III.

"Oh for a beaker full of the warm south,
Full of the true—the blissful Hippocrene ;
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth."

Keats.

"WE have partaken of thy wine," said the guide, whom his companions addressed by the name of Hamet, "now, señor, we will convince thee that the wild haunts of the Sierra de Gata can supply as luscious a draught as the rich huertas of Alcantara. Brothers! we are not often favoured with such noble guests, try if ye cannot find a bota of moçao for the honour of our rugged home."

Without making any reply, unless such

could be called a look stealthily exchanged between them, one of the tribe arose, and disappeared at the back of the cavern. Agitated by vague fears, Donna Inez drew closer to her father, but to her unspeakable relief the man in a few minutes returned unaccompanied, save by a leathern bota, with the contents of which a small horn was quickly filled and handed to the knight. He pronounced it excellent. "Nor is finer wine drank in the palaces of Toledo," he observed, as turning to his daughter he offered to her the delicious beverage. Every eye among the Egyptians was fixed upon Inez, and it appeared to her excited mind that there was a meaning in their eager looks, not to be explained by the pride with which they proffered their boasted wine. She suffered the brim of the sparkling horn to touch her lips, but declined the earnest invitation of Hamet to taste of it more freely, and the cup passed on; each of the Spaniards unfearingly partaking of the Gitani's delicious draught.

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By degrees an unsuspecting confidence was established among the travellers. Nought but a hospitable welcome, if rough, yet kind, appeared in their hosts ; and even the apprehensive lady, though rendered suspicious by the perilous position of her beloved and only parent, began to reproach herself that her distrust had been ungenerous and misplaced. But suddenly the animated conversations with which the cavern rung were checked by a deep voice at the entrance, exclaiming :—" How now, my merry men,—what cheer ?" At the same moment a sturdy, thick-set figure leisurely advanced towards the fire, giving abundant opportunity for all to mark his countenance and bearing ;—and they were well calculated to revive the fears, now nearly subsided. His wide trousers and loose vest were fashioned like those of the rest of his tribe, as also were his gay sash with its dagger and curved scymitar. But his frightful countenance distinguished him not

only from them, but from the whole human race; and on *it* the eyes of Donna Inez dwelt with an involuntary and immovable gaze of horror, only to be compared to that which fixes the doom of the victim of the rattlesnake. Some fell accident, or strange freak of nature, had given to the upper part of his face a crushed appearance, and where the nose should have been, only two small orifices which served as nostrils were perceptible. His brows, though bushy, were unprojecting; his eyes deeply set, and expressive of recklessness and cruelty; whilst in proportion as the upper portion of his face retreated, the jaws and lower part of the cheeks advanced, and a wide shapeless mouth and lips, only indicated by a narrow streak of somewhat deeper brown than the rest of the face, displayed long fang-like teeth, of which one or two were wanting. A white turban, surmounting his long, straggling, and dull dark hair, aided in giving distinctness to

the loathsome ugliness of the deformed Gitano ; who, as he approached the fire, growled — “ Strangers here ! Who has dared disclose the secret of our cavern ? ”

Hamet approaching him, replied aloud :—“ I agreed to lead these travellers across the sierra, but night overtaking us, was fain to offer them shelter. Doubtless, the good señor will take care that our retreat is not betrayed.”

“ But there are women among them,—who can restrain their babbling tongues ? ”

The heart of Donna Inez sunk within her, for she marked that the glance of the speaker was fixed on herself. At that moment the knight with ruffled brow arose, and was about to speak, but ere he could utter a word, the hideous being had hastily stalked to the place where the lady and her almost fainting attendant were seated ; muttering as he went, —“ I will be satisfied with no assurance but

my own respecting *their* silence,—the babbling fools!”

With a rude mockery of gallantry, he threw himself at the feet of Inez, who, rushing to the other side of her father, covered her face with her hands, as if she would exclude the very shadow of such frightful distortion.

The knight, indignant at the audacity of the Egyptian, laid his hand on his sword, exclaiming:—“Base hound! darest thou thrust thy loathsome visage within sight of a Castilian lady? Begone!”

“How now!” replied the Gitano, springing to his feet, “one would think I were an intruder into the halls of this lordling, instead of himself being a sojourner in our dwelling. What harm is there in my assuring the lady of my devoted homage to her charms? What think ye, my men? is this the return we ought to expect for our hospitality?”

As a confused murmur rose among the Gitani, the lady cast a timid glance around, and ob-

serving their numbers, felt at once convinced that their only security was in appearing insensible to the rough habits of so lawless a tribe. For her beloved father's sake, therefore, whose safety was her first thought, she made an effort to overcome her repugnance to behold again the singular and disgusting deformity. Vainly, however, did she raise her beseeching eyes,—they were closed with a shudder of uncontrollable horror when they met his tiger-like glance;—but a few low dulcet tones escaped her pale lips, which might have soothed the shaggy lord of the forest. “Forgive the hasty words of a father, and I pray thee, respect his grey hairs!”

“Aye, aye,” growled the miscreant, “we will respect his grey hairs: ha! ha! ha!” And the wide vault echoed with his harsh laughter. “What say ye, my comrades, shall the alforgas of the knight pay for his insolence, and this fair damsel be our hostage that he betray not our secret?—Nay, an’ thou resist,

sir knight, 'twere easy to thrust thee hence, and fling thee, despite thy haughty bearing and vest of steel, over the side of the precipice."

The knight's sword was now unsheathed, and waving around the scarce breathing form that clung to his mailed breast. "The first who approaches me is a dead man," he loudly exclaimed,—“his blood be on his own head!”

But the words were scarcely uttered, when a powerful grasp from behind seized his arm, and at the same instant, by a simultaneous movement, Perez and the two troopers were overpowered and secured. On perceiving her father's weapon wrested from his grasp, Donna Inez uttered a faint cry of despair; and Sanchiza rushing to the further end of the cave, made the roof re-echo with her frantic screams.

The events of a moment are tedious to describe,—those just narrated occurred with the swiftness of thought; and but a few moments had elapsed since the entrance of the hideous Gitano, when another individual, of far different costume

and bearing, appeared at the mouth of the cavern. The sound of his voice was accompanied by the clang of armour, as striding over the rocky floor, he exclaimed :—" Whence arose those cries ? Who dares offer violence to a woman ?"

The swart figures of the Gitani reeled on each side of the advancing stranger, as if some magic wand had suddenly rendered them powerless. The captives who but an instant before stood helpless in their grasp, were free ; and he of the hideous face, whose daring effrontery had caused the disturbance, quietly stole away and disappeared.

The stranger was evidently a knight of considerable rank ;—he wore a splendid haubert, or shirt, of linked mail, with brassards and cuissards to correspond ; the steel rings of which being flat, and highly polished, flashed in the red light of the fire at every movement. Over his closed helmet nodded a crimson plume, and of the same colour was his gambisoon, or under

vest of quilted and puckered satin; the sleeves of which, as his hands were ungauntleted, appeared at the wrist. Whether it was the splendour of his coat of mail, or his fearless carriage, or the suddenness of his apparition among them, that struck the Gitani with fear and reverence, certain it is, they offered but slight resistance to his enforced entrance, although neither squire nor page, nor attendant of any kind followed his steps. One after another they fled as he flung them aside, and in a few moments no one remained in the cave with the victor, save the aged knight, to whose bosom yet clung his trembling child, and their astonished attendants.

"Is it possible," said the stranger, "that those dastardly hounds have dared to offer violence to a Christian knight? Pardon me, señor, but as, benighted in these mountains, I strove to recover my lost path, cries of distress reached mine ear; are not these the lips whence those sounds arose?"

"Thou hast rightly guessed, señor, we were indeed in extremity. Benighted like yourself in the sierra, we, in an evil hour, accepted the hospitality of this vagrant crew, who proved in truth courteous and respectful, until one entered, with the look of a fiend, (a chief among them I presume) whose sturdy insolence provoked our Castilian blood. They had taken advantage of our unguarded confidence, to separate my men from me and from each other, therefore found it not difficult, by a sudden movement, which had every appearance of being a preconcerted one, to overpower us all. In fine, we might have been plundered—perhaps slain—had not our good angel sent thee to our aid."

"By my knighthood," replied the stranger, "I regret not the mischance, which erewhile was fretting my very soul. With thy leave, señor, I will remain here till morning dawns, not only—believe me—because glad to avail myself of shelter for the night, but that I may form a slight addition to this fair lady's escort." He

made a low obeisance as he thus alluded to Donna Inez, who bent her head in graceful acknowledgment of his courtesy. She resumed her previous resting-place, and Sanchiza, mindful of forms, now that a Christian knight, though unknown, was present, stood behind her mistress.

Whilst Perez by command of his lord once more opened the *alforgas*, and drew from their recesses provisions for the stranger, Donna Inez, turning to her attendant, said:—"Sit down beside me, my good girl; thou hast surely had fatigue enough this day,—now take thy rest."

The weary domestic gladly obeyed, and bending her head on her hand, was in a few moments fast asleep.

"Behold!" said the aged knight, as he poured out the sparkling wine, "this is the best remedy for the benumbing quality of these mountain breezes. Drink, señor, and forget the bitter blasts of the sierra!"

The stranger raised the volant piece of his helmet, just sufficiently to pledge the father of Inez in a draught of Val-de-peñas, but closing it immediately, declined the further hospitality he proffered.

And now Perez, with the assistance of his men, who like himself could scarcely move for very weariness, was reclosing the alforgas, when Hamet entered. "Come hither fellow," cried the veteran knight :—"Cowardly slave! why didst thou not check the lawless insolence of thy comrade, when he dared to insult this noble lady?"

"How!" exclaimed the stranger, with a voice of fury, at the same time starting from his seat :—"Did the dog presume?"

The marked features of Hamet wore a singular expression of audacity and humility, as bending before the stranger, he gave him a look full of intelligence and caution, and replied in a sneering tone :—"Cloton did but prostrate himself at the lady's feet, señor,—an attitude,

which among our people is one of extreme respect. I suppose it was the peculiar graces of his countenance that alarmed the lady; and the hasty words of the knight provoked the ire of our people, who love not to be reviled in their own lair. For myself, I appeal to thee, sir knight of the crimson plume, whom I have many a time directed aright when bewildered among the mountains; which is likeliest, that Hamet's treachery or the knight's own impatience deserves the blame of the late tumult?"

"Thou speakest reasonably," replied the stranger, "and I would fain believe truly." Then turning to the veteran knight, he added:—"I know some little of this vagrant race, ^{senior} for my passion for the chase hath occasionally brought me into such straits as to render me thankful of their aid (and in particular that of Hamet) in crossing this rocky wilderness. I have never doubted his fidelity; but I cannot wonder, that with such a treasure

under thy protection, thou shouldst be impatient of their rude manners."

Donna Inez, too well convinced that the conduct of the Gitani proceeded rather from premeditated insolence than blunt rustic breeding, was ill satisfied with this explanation of their behaviour; but perceiving her father's brow clear as he entertained the idea, that he had in truth been too hasty, she made no attempt to undeceive him.

By this time the troopers were nodding by the fire, Sanchiza was fast asleep,—even the eyes of Perez and his lord began to grow heavy, and Hamet, after a short absence, brought a woman of his tribe, who with a modest and timid air offered to conduct Donna Inez to a small inner cave, near at hand, where she could take a few hours' rest. Welcome indeed would have been the proposal, but the idea of parting from her father in that wild place deterred her from accepting it. In her expressive eyes he read her thoughts, and replying to them, said :

—“Fear not, my child,—that these people are honest, though uncivilized, I am well assured ; —besides, myself and Perez will sleep across thy threshold, and we will all in turn keep vigilant watch here. But, by my knightly word ! I never beheld my followers so completely overpowered with sleep ! The air of these mountains must be the cause, for mine own eyelids are weighed down with extreme drowsiness.”

“Thou sayest truly, señor,” cried the stranger eagerly, (and though his voice sounded hollow through the bars of his helmet, Inez, each time he spoke, felt more strongly the conviction that she had heard such tones before) :—“in fact, so just is thy observation, that for that very cause the sick are often brought into this district after the crisis of a fever, when the effect which we find so oppressive, is to them the most efficacious of remedies.”

The Egyptian damsel had opened a door, imperceptible save on a close inspection, and Inez

felt reassured when she found her chamber was merely a small recess close to the spot where she had been for the last hour sitting. With some difficulty they aroused Sanchiza, but the instant they entered the rocky bower, she threw herself on the dried rushes which, strewed in one corner, formed a not unwelcome couch, and was in a moment locked again in heavy slumber. The Gitana offered to supply the place of the sleepy attendant, but Inez remarking that it could not want many hours till dawn, and that she should spend the interval folded in her cloak, declined her services ; she therefore retired, leaving behind her, at the lady's request, the rude lamp with which she had lighted her to her rugged resting-place.

Left thus alone, Inez, seated on a small stool, the only one in the chamber, was soon busily employed in recalling the occurrences of that eventful day. She thought of her beloved Castile, quitted in all probability for ever, —of the stately home of her early years, when

surrounded by the most scrupulous and observant attentions, each wayward wish of her childhood had been regarded with deference. Every lost blessing, so little prized whilst enjoyed, she now dwelt upon with lingering and regretful remembrance, and for the moment forgot the terrors and uncertainties of her present situation in picturing to herself those scenes of past pleasures which she might behold no more.

Thus borne away by painful memories, long did the lady sit motionless; the only evidence of the nature of her busy thoughts being the large tears that, escaping from her drooping eyelashes, gemmed her enfolded hands. A slight noise in the outer cave at length disturbed her reverie;—it was only the armour of one of the sleepers clashing, as he turned in his slumbers, against the rocky floor; but it sufficed to break the spell that enchained her mind. Thus admonished of the urgencies of the present hour, she rallied her drooping energies, and addressed

herself to the task of analysing the events of the evening.

In doing this she found all her fears,—even her horror of that hideous being whose apparition had shocked and unnerved her,—far exceeded by the undefined dread, not distinctly traceable to any sufficient cause, with which she regarded the stranger knight. She thought over, again and again, his sudden appearance,—the rapid and unresisting flight of the wild Gitani,—and above all, those harsh tones, which, save when studiously softened, fell with so unpleasant a familiarity on her ear. But she strove in vain to render more intelligible the chord in her memory which they caused to vibrate so painfully. Then came the startling inquiry,—“Is treachery threatened?—and if so, to whom?” Her only answer was found in the dread ever present to her mind, of her sire's enforced return to Toledo, and of the inevitable fate awaiting him, should his tyrannical sovereign regain possession of his person.

Fearful thoughts began to chill her heart,—a dimness came over her eyes,—she drew her breath with difficulty, and arising from her seat, she hastily crossed the little chamber, half resolved to rejoin her father, and leave him no more. Ere her hand was on the door, however, she remembered that her presence could avail little, save to disturb the repose, so hardly earned by the fatigues of the day, and so needful to prepare for those of the morrow. Returning, therefore, to her lowly resting-place, she confided herself to that Paternal care which never slumbers, and strove to place her father likewise, with perfect reliance at His disposal. “Better dwell in a dungeon,” she murmured, “in conformity with His blessed will, than in a palace steeped in crime !”

This act of resignation lightened her sinking heart, and beginning more tranquilly to consider her situation, she remembered the dark-browed

female who had conducted her to her cell. As she recalled the timid downcast look with which the young Gitana passed the strange knight, she indulged the thought that in the mind where modesty was a dweller, other gentle feelings might abide; and if so, some sympathy for others. The woman had promised to arouse them at daybreak:—"What if I question her," murmured Inez, "and hinting my fears without betraying our dangerous secret, endeavour to ascertain by her means if treachery be weaving its web around us?" As she revolved this idea in her mind, the calmness which gradually stilled her perturbed thoughts permitted her to become sensible of the weariness of her frame. She folded herself more closely in her cloak, and reclining on the couch of reeds, sought rest for her aching limbs; intending, however, to watch till dawn. Vain resolve! to intense thought succeeded confused and incoherent ideas, more and more mingling, and each instant more indistinct; until at length sleep gently stole over her

weary senses, and hushed in calm forgetfulness
all the doubts, fears, and anxieties of her boding
heart.

CHAPTER IV.

"I lodge in fear;
Though this a heavenly angel, hell is here.
One, two, three.—Time, time!"

Cymbeline.

From her refreshing slumber Inez was gently roused by the low voice of the Gitana; and as its sad tones struck her awakened senses, the lady started, and looked in her face with dismay and fear. The lamp was extinguished, and the cold grey light of earliest morning came faintly down into her grim abiding place, through an irregular opening in the rock, which might have been easily mistaken for a fissure of nature's making. As, recalling the events of the past day, Donna

Inez gazed around, her eye fell on the vacant couch, which had been occupied by Sanchiza; and hastily rising, she exclaimed with an agitated voice,—“Where is my attendant?”

“Hush!” replied the Gitana, placing her finger on her lip, “speak low.”

“Wherefore?” asked Inez, in the low tones suggested to her; then remembering her fears on the previous night, she laid her hand on the girl’s arm, and fixing her eyes on her swarthy features, murmured:—“Thou hast a woman’s form,—surely her gentle feelings must nestle at thy heart—oh tell me, I implore thee, what unthought-of danger is creeping secretly around us? My, faithful Sanchiza,—my father! tell me, where is my father?”

“They bade me say,” replied the woman, deliberately, and with an immovable countenance, “that thy father, alarmed by news brought by some of our people, who beheld a troop of al-guazils hastening hitherward across the eastern plain, has just started with his squire and at-

tendants on his way towards the frontier, requesting, ere he left, that the red plume, who had to resume his armour, would conduct thee after him more leisurely."

"'Tis impossible," replied Inez; "no regard for his own safety would induce my father to leave me here! Had I no other assurance of his anxious love than the experience of yesterday, that alone would make me doubt thy message, though I confess myself at a loss to guess a motive for such an imposition. But supposing it to be true,—where is my woman?"

"They bade me tell thee she is without," replied the Gitana, as slowly as before.

"And I conjure thee, by thy love for the mother who bore thee—where is my father?"

"I have said all they bade me."

"Tell me, at least, who is this stranger, and how doth he possess so marked an influence over thy tribe?"

"What dost thou call thyself?"

"Alas! why wilt thou not answer me?"

"Such was the intention of my question—but I must be brief, for they are impatient who wait without."

"Speak as briefly as thou wilt, but tell me who is this stranger?"

"Follow me, if thou wouldst have thy answer."

And as she spoke, the Gitana approached the side of the cavern opposite to that whence Inez had entered it, and to the great surprise of the latter, partly opened a small door, so cunningly fitted into the face of the rock as to have entirely escaped her notice. A bright gleam of the newly risen sun came cheerfully in through the narrow aperture, making the dim cavern appear by the contrast all gloom and dreariness. The glorious beam awakened hope in the drooping heart of the lady, and any escape from the cold prison-like walls that were around her seeming most desirable, she hastily advanced to the opening. On reaching the threshold, however, she shrunk back, for nought was before

her but a narrow shelf-like ledge projecting from the perpendicular face of the mountain. As she hesitated, the woman gently but firmly pushed her forwards, whispering as she did so : “ I am watched, señora, and as helpless as thyself ;— thou hast not answered my question, but I can reply both to that, and thine own. *Thou* art the defenceless dove — *he* the vulture, — be warned !” .

Her finger was placed on her thin lips, as she regarded the trembling girl with a glance full of meaning ; then slowly, but with irresistible strength, closed the narrow door ; and the sound of its passing bolts announced to Inez that it was firmly secured. At the same instant, the clang of armour from another direction reached her ear, and turning, she beheld the object of her distrustful inquiries.

In one brief moment, however, the feelings of Inez had undergone a complete revolution ; all her fears had hitherto been for her venerable sire, but the dark hints of the Gitana suggested

to her other reasons for apprehension. This new dread, however, failed to crush her spirit with the withering agony which the thought of yet seeing her father in the power of his enemies inflicted; and actually relieved by finding that if danger were at hand, it threatened not *him*, she prepared to avert what might menace herself, with a heart which swelled with indignation rather than trembled with dismay.

It was but a few paces from the spot whereon she stood, to the abrupt angle, from behind which the knight now made his appearance, and anxious not to compromise the friendly Gitana, she strove to meet him with untroubled countenance. As he shortened the space between them, Inez felt that through his closed vizor he was earnestly regarding her, but whether with a look of scrutiny, or doubt, or triumph, it was vain to conjecture. However that might be, she met his gaze with a fearless glance of high resolve, and awaited his approach in an attitude of quiet dignity; but there was a brightness in

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her eye, and a flush upon her cheek, which, if he marked her features well, might have struck him as strangely contrasting with the drooping languor of the previous evening. The self-reliance of a powerful mind appeared in every line of her beautiful countenance, and in the curve of her delicate lip, a close observer might have detected a touch of scorn.

The knight approached, and with a low obeisance would have taken her hand, as he murmured the morning greeting, but withholding it, she replied:—"Pardon me, señor,—it resteth in my memory that I left my father and his attendants in thy company last night, and to them, as is most meet, I look for safe, conduct now."

"Hath not the Gitana informed thee, noble lady," he replied, with some hesitation of voice and manner, which, however, disappeared as he proceeded; "of the sudden and ill-omened news which hurried thy sire from his brief slumbers? Surely, señora, thou wouldst not deprive him

of the scanty few that with desperate fidelity attend him, for the sake of a mere form?"

"Your maiden's information was indeed of such startling import; but when I remember that yesterday my father resisted my earnest entreaties that he would quit me, for the more speedy securance of himself, I cannot believe that to-day he would consider my safe-conduct a 'mere matter of form.' "

"I presume, señora," replied the stranger, with an air and accent of wounded pride, "that thy sire estimates the service of a belted knight at other rate than that of squire or varlet."

"But my woman, señor," faltered Inez, whose doubts began to waver,—“she did not attend my rising."

"The damsel entered the outer cave just as her lord and his followers were departing; and, (since I find I must be explicit)" he added, with a disagreeable inflection of his voice, which once more wounded the ear of Inez,—“the good

knight requested that thou mightest not be brought into the cavern, wherein the Gitani (among them the hideous Cloton) were taking their morning meal. After waiting some time for their dispersion, I was informed by the maiden who guided thee hither, that there was another outlet from this chamber, and I instantly desired thy bowerwoman to attend thee from it. But on approaching this dizzy path, her weak head swam with terror, and shrinking back she preferred to await thee on the plain I have just quitted, where the horses stand ready for mounting. Suffer me, señora, to conduct thee thither, —we have only to pass yon angular projection, and then thy maiden can repeat the request entrusted to her by thy father, that thou wouldst lose no time in following him." Inez still hesitated, and the knight after a pause, resumed : "Having pledged my knightly word to my brother-in-arms not to quit thee, señora, until thou art restored to him, I am bound to await thy pleasure ; but permit me to remark, that

every moment of delay increases the distance between us and him."

"Good angels be my guard!" exclaimed Inez, and hastily concluding that the knight must be more worthy of credence than the half-savage creature who had warned her of treachery, she continued:—"Lead on, señor;" adding, as the knight once more offered his hand, "Nay, it is not necessary;—my brain reels not, though the height at which we stand is indeed fearful."

With rapid and haughty strides the knight led the way, and Inez slowly following, fixed her eyes on the broad breast of an opposite mountain, and thus escaped the fatal dizziness which might have caused her destruction.

The sun had just risen, and the lady's steps being directed towards the north, his dazzling beams fell warm upon her, and though they also decked with splendour the eastern side of the cliff on which she gazed, the southern portion of a mountain directly opposite to her remained in

comparative gloom. It was on that dark headland that she fixed her eyes, and as they became familiar with its shadows, the dim outline of a solitary horseman, resting motionless beneath the overhanging cliff, became distinctly revealed ; though, but for her prolonged gaze, scarcely distinguishable from the mountain side. A faint gleam reflected from the brightening skies, hovered around the rider's form, and suggested the glimmer of armour. A joyous idea occurred to Inez,—it was her father,—watching, ere he proceeded further, her safe passage of that perilous path. Another moment converted the thought into conviction ; for the horse suddenly bounded from his concealment, and a bright flash, as he darted across the sunny edge of the mountain, clearly defined the outline of the mail-clad rider.

Reassured by the slight incident, and disposed to atone for her distrust towards her conductor, the lady with more rapid step followed him ; and when, on reaching the abrupt angle, he proffered

his hand for the purpose of leading her safely past, she withheld it not. In another instant they stood on a slope of the mountain, decked with a few stunted pines and straggling patches of short herbage. There, quietly sniffing over the brown blades of grass,—which, however, his dainty lips did not deign to taste,—stood the lady's palfrey; but no sooner did his mistress make her appearance, than he started from the hand of the Gitano who held his bridle, and trotted to her side. There also, in charge of another of the tribe, was a powerful grey war-horse, evincing by his restless movements, his impatience of inaction; and several of the Gitani were lurking around. But Inez looked in vain for Sanchiza; and as she turned to address the knight, who had now yielded precedence to her, she beheld the hideous Cloton, who had placed himself before the narrow path she had just quitted. Her fears returned, and in trembling tones, she inquired for her woman.

“Where is the lady's attendant, varlets?” ex

claimed the knight.—The Gitani grinned, but made no reply. “Well, well,” he continued, “since she has chosen to absent herself she must e’en overtake us. In the meantime, señora, as we have already loitered so long; permit me to assist thee to the saddle.”

Distrustful of his proffered courtesy, however, the lady retreated, exclaiming,—“Thou hast deceived me, sir knight, and I trust thee no more ! Who thou art, or what motive impels thee to impose on a helpless lady, I know not ; but rather will I be flung headlong from yon cliff than accompany thee farther.”

“I’faith, fair damsel, such desperate measures were far from my desire, yet though thou mayest not choose but go with me, believe me, Donna Inez,” (and the harsh tones of his voice smote her ear, like some remembered discord,) “I mean thee nought but honour, and such fate as the noblest lady might be proud to choose.”

“No human will but my own shall direct my destiny,” she answered,—her native pride for a moment struggling with dismay and terror.

"Thou hast already chosen ; but not well," he said, in low, stern tones ; "and I have sworn, by my father's soul, that thou shalt retract that haughty scorn."

"Beware, sir knight," she faintly cried as he seized her arm ; "I saw, but now, my father regarding me from yonder cliff, and if aught but gentlest courtesy be offered to his child, his vengeance——" Her words were interrupted by a loud mocking laugh from the swarthy group around her ; and the knight waving his hand, the palfrey was led towards him.

Inez marked them not, for she was reflecting on his last words, and endeavouring to connect their indistinct meaning with the faintly remembered discord of his voice. On a sudden the disjointed memories were linked together,—the enigma was solved,—the mystery explained ;—one vivid idea revealed it all. A bright flush flitted across her face, and fixing her eyes on the impenetrable helmet of the knight, she exclaimed, "'Tis he !—'tis Caelho !—then only heaven can aid me." Her clasped hands and beseeching eyes

were raised to that blue vault, above which mercy and justice are supposed to dwell ; though, in truth, they are ever around the trusting soul ; —a sharp spasm shot through her frame,—lip, cheek, and brow, were overspread with a mortal paleness, and she sunk on the rugged rock, in a deep and death-like swoon.

“ There is no need of thee now,” exclaimed the knight, striking violently with his lance, the palfrey who stood beside him ; “ ’tis now as well as if she had quaffed of the drugged magao. Bring instantly the litter; quick!—quick!” he shouted ; then turning towards the insensible form of Inez, muttered in a tone of grim satisfaction:—“ Since she proves so cursed suspicious, ’tis, perhaps, the best chance that could have befallen.”

Whilst he thus spoke, the fiery creature, which for the first time in its existence smarted under the infliction of so fierce a blow, sprung from the spot, and with head erect, and dishevelled mane, galloped round the small plain ; whilst his starting veins and distended nostrils bore witness that his generous spirit was chafed

into rage and terror. Twice he encircled the narrow area ; and just as a litter was brought by the Gitani for the service of his hapless mistress, he found a descending path, and disappeared at a pace that could scarcely fail of ensuring him, in that rocky and precipitous region, a speedy and terrific fall. The way he had taken was narrow and steep, and the impetus given by his rapid escape drove him headlong down it. Fortunately, however, it chanced that, with the usual inequality of mountain paths, a rise as steep and sudden soon opposed a considerable trial to his strength and wind, and no sounds pursuing him, he gradually relaxed his pace, and at length paused. But scarcely had he begun to draw more composed breath, when the tramp of approaching horses caused him to erect his ears and gaze forward with that intelligent look of inquiry, which is, perhaps, the most marked expression of his noble race.

And not in vain was his eager glance ; for two horsenem appeared on the brow of the acclivity

he was ascending, whose figures stood forth in bold relief against the glowing sky ; and as if rising out of the earth, appeared so suddenly before him, that the terrors of the startled animal were renewed. Prevented by the rock from darting to the right or left, he turned short round, and retraced his former path ; but so rapid were his movements that scarce a moment elapsed after he received the savage blow that sent him on his travels, ere he was on his return.

The persons who thus unintentionally interrupted the stray steed, were not in any respect particularly remarkable, if it be remembered that we record events which occurred in the fourteenth century. The first wore a suit of plate armour bright as silver, and probably of admirable temper, but totally unadorned. His casque bore no plume, and had no proper vizor, its only fastening being on one side, and a cross-shaped opening in front sufficing for the purposes of light and air. Around his neck hung a slight chain

of gold, from which depended a richly ornamented bugle, such as was used in hunting; and not only was every part of his person encased with armour, but even the broad chest of his powerful charger was defended by a poitrel of steel, and a wide plate over his forehead, together with the linked bridle and stirrups, were formed of the same metal. A small round shield, called in terms of chivalry, "a table of attente," hung on the knight's left arm, and his right hand held the lance in rest, as if he were conscious of some approaching foe.

Of his companion,—who displayed the same guarded caution already ascribed to his superior,—it is only necessary to observe, that the fashion of his armour, and the position he occupied, indicated the squire.

As they reached the brow of the hill, they reined in their steeds, being compelled to descend with deliberate caution the slippery path. It was then the knight exclaimed,—“We are right, Gaspar; this runaway palfrey is the same we marked from yonder cliff.”

"That thy conjecture is nigh the truth, I doubt not, señor; but to mine own eyes, these rocks and mountains, ravines and vallies, so much resemble each other, that we appear to be always on the same spot, or nearly so."

"Nay, nay, Gaspar,—'tis not so very a labyrinth, this rocky wilderness. See ye not yon bluff?—'Twas there we stood, observant of those, who little dreamed any earthly eye beheld them. Did we not gaze towards the south?"

"True: the sun was just rising on our left."

"And, Gaspar, my heart misgives me still;—the scene we viewed,—yon flying jennet, ready caparisoned for a lady's mounting,—why, think-est thou, doth he roam here unsought? Onward he flieth,—now if he return whence he came, thy labyrinth is not without a clue."

"Thank heaven!" exclaimed Gaspar, as they reached the termination of the descent, "we may now push on again."

"Spare not thy spur," replied the knight; or we shall lose our guide." And such good speed

made their gallant steeds, that when the flying jennet leaped upon the narrow plain, they were close behind him. But scant welcome was accorded to the unlooked-for visitors, by the party whom their sudden appearance startled.

One rapid glance sufficed to enable him of the sombre steed to comprehend the scene it revealed to him ; for, hastening to the spot where the red knight stood, in the act of placing the senseless form of the Castilian lady in the litter, he laid his mailed hand with a heavy grasp on his shoulder, exclaiming,—“ A moment's pause, señor ! Thou removest not this lady hence without *my* leave.”

“ Indeed ! ” replied the other with a bitter sneer. “ And who art thou, who darest to cross *my* will ? ”

“ The friend of the defenceless,—as I am ready to prove on thy body ! ”

“ Keep thou on thy path, and interfere not in a matter wherein thou hast no concern,” rejoined Caelho, and in his voice surprise and rage strove to counterfeit indignation.

"Trifle not with me," replied the stranger with an accent of command; "the cause of the oppressed is my cause."

"Oh, indeed! And so thou hast kindly come to condole with me on my domestic misfortunes," said Caelho in a tone of bitter irony. "But I would have thee consider, officious knight! that it is sufficient anguish for me to know myself an injured man, without the additional misery of a witness of my unhappiness."

The latter words were uttered with so well-feigned an expression of wounded feeling, that the stranger hesitated, apparently fearful of rudely intruding on the sanctity of some deep woe, or cruelly prying into the circumstances of an ineffaceable disgrace. It chanced, however, that Donna Inez had now re-opened her eyes, and quickly remembering her danger, caught the import of the last cunning words. Suddenly springing from the arm of her enemy, she placed the black knight betwixt herself and him, exclaiming rapidly, and with tremulous earnestness,

“ His words are false, sir knight, and his intentions treachery !—Oh, if thou art the friend of innocence, believe him not. Stranger though thou art, I will trust thee rather than him. Behold ! I claim thy protection, and denounce this traitor as a discourteous knight, and dishonour to chivalry !”

Caelho had taken advantage of the deep interest with which these words were listened to by the unknown knight, to shake off his relaxed grasp, and mount his charger ; but noted as he did so the craven abettors of his villainy stealing moodily away. No attempt was made to oppose his regaining his destrier ; but as soon as he was firmly seated, the black knight said to him : —“ Thou hast heard the charge, señor,—behold I am ready to do battle as the lady’s champion !—Nay, attempt not further parley ;—the God of battles must decide betwixt her and thee, since to myself ye are both equally unknown.”

CHAPTER V.


“ Ascend, I follow thee, safe guide, the path
Thou leadest me ; and to the hand of Heaven submit,
However chastening ; to the evil turn
My obvious breast ; arming to overcome
By suffering, and earn rest from labour won,
If so I may attain.”

Paradise Lost.

THE knights wheeled round their chargers,
and at the usual distance confronted each other ;
whilst Gaspar, being by the laws of chivalry forbidden to interfere in the quarrel, unless his lord were in deadly peril, kept guard beside the lady. With a concussion that shook their elevated battle-plain, the two warriors met in its centre ; both horses were thrown on their haunches, and

the spear of Caelho was shivered into fragments against the circular shield of his opponent. That of the latter, however, was more true, for striking with unerring force against his adversary's helmet, its fastenings burst, and it rolled to the ground. The knights regarded each other for a moment, silent and motionless. Conscious guilt and furious rage appeared in the agitated face so suddenly revealed; but no word escaped the stranger,—no gesture that might explain the feeling that fixed him for one brief moment motionless as a statue.

Not so Gaspar, for as the helmet of the false knight rolled from his head, a sudden and convulsive jerk of the reins caused his proud charger to rear and plunge in high disdain of a check so uncalled-for; and Inez veiled her face with her hands, as if unwilling to behold lineaments which, though not ill-formed, were singularly unprepossessing. They were those of a man who had just attained his prime. His small eyes were deeply set, and the muscles round



them much swollen, whilst a multitude of lines diverging from their angles, gave them an expression of cunning which was not improved by the scanty lashes that failed to soften their fierceness. His hair and complexion were such as are rarely seen in a southern clime—the former being of a light and tintless brown, and the latter florid; his brow was broad but remarkably low, his nose sharply aquiline, and the angles of his thin lips slightly curved upwards.

The two knights dismounted, and foot to foot, and hand to hand, continued the fierce encounter: caution and skill were displayed,—rapid and heavy blows exchanged; but at length Caelho's sword was shivered into fragments, and his brow received the blow which his guard had lessened, though not averted. He instantly fell, and the ground was crimson with his blood. The victor addressed the usual inquiry, on the answer of which hung oft-times life and death; but Caelho answered not, and turning to Gaspar,

the knight said in low tones:—"Search thou the wound, and stanch the flowing blood. I will send the first aid I meet with to relieve thee of the unwelcome task." Then hastening to the spot where the lady remained pale and trembling, he addressed her with a low obeissance: "Senora, thy enemy is at thy feet!"

"Not dead, señor! I trust not dead! Villain though he be, I wished not his destruction."

"Heed him not—his blood be on his own head! But inform me, señora, what further duty, as thy chosen protector, I may essay to perform. There is a convent of Benedictine nuns some ten miles to the westward—thy palfrey is here; shall I conduct thee thither?"

Donna Inez gladly acquiesced, and at the sound of her voice the docile animal approached her,—but she suddenly paused, and said:—"I have one dreadful fear, señor,—that my father, with our attendants, are still in the power of the Gitani. 'Tis true, yon fallen knight declared

that they were on their way to the frontier—but his words have ever been deceitful.”

“ Whither shall I direct my steps, for the removal of thy doubts ?”

Inez pointed out the way she came, informing him there were two doors, which must in all likelihood be forced ere they could attain their object. Carrying his mace and shield, the knight instantly undertook the enterprise, and with a few strokes of the former easily mastered the frail fastenings of the outer door. As they entered the little cell she had occupied on the previous night, (for her anxiety respecting her father forbade Inez to remain behind,) she shuddered, remembering the wiles that were then weaving to ensnare her. She made no pause however, but leading the way to the inner door, assisted in removing its fastenings, and with surprise discovered that it was not by them alone secured, since it still resisted every effort to open it. Gaspar now joined them, and aided the knight in his attempt upon the door, but sud-

denly a confused sound was heard, the fastenings were slowly, and as if by unaccustomed hands, withdrawn,—the door opened, and the first object that met the delighted eyes of Inez was her beloved father! With one joyful bound she sprung into his arms, and clinging to his bosom, replied to his looks of astonishment and alarm. “Behold! my father, the gallant knight who has preserved thy child.”

The veteran looked earnestly at the strangers, and his first expression of bewildered surprise quickly gave way to a glance and tone of suspicion, as he rapidly and with agitation exclaimed:—“Hath our friend changed his armour? No! ’tis not he! taller,—more erect,—more symmetrical,—attended too! and in my daughter’s chamber! Speak, sir knight, how earnest thou hither?”

“Thou art safe, dearest father,” murmured Inez, “and I with thee! Blessed be the Almighty Providence that hath protected us both! Sanchiza, too, here!” she added, as but half

awakened, and with looks of wild astonishment, the bewildered bower maiden arose from a low settle, on which she had been sleeping, and approached her mistress.

"God send us safe out of these fearful hills!" she exclaimed, "for they are inhabited but by wild heathens and dealers in witchcraft! Lo! I lay down last night in my lady's chamber, and awake this morning in this vile cave, where the troopers sleep! Sure, the deceits of the evil one are around me!"

There was no one at leisure, however, to sympathize with her amazement and mortification, for each had, besides the general astonishment and curiosity, a particular and individual motive for inquiry. The father's questions claimed the first attention, and in as few words as possible, the stranger informed him how, arising with the dawn from a night's rest in a southern nook of a neighbouring mountain, he had observed the meeting of Inez and the crimson knight at the very brink of a fearful precipice. He told him

also, how espying what was hidden from her—the horde of Gitani (easily distinguishable in the grey light by their turbans and gaudy dresses) that appeared awaiting his approach,—he suspected some wrong was meditated, and hastened to the spot. Having, however, to pursue a circuitous route, sometimes on the summit of a ridge, at others in the depths of a ravine, he found it impossible to keep in view the cliff which he was anxious to reach; and would probably have missed it, or found it too late, but for the timely appearance of the palfrey. After relating the issue of the combat, his narrative ended, and it was now the lady's turn to satisfy the curiosity all felt to know what strange chance brought her alone on the mountain-side. Even the troopers, who had been aroused from their heavy slumbers by the attempt to force the door, around which they had slept, approached as nearly as the familiar manners of the age permitted; anxious to learn what peril had threatened the beloved

being, in whose defence, each would have cheerfully perilled his existence.

As the soft voice of Inez related the adventures of the morning, her eyes were cast down in timid consciousness of many listeners; and her eloquent countenance, expressive of every emotion of her soul, changed, as the events she described passed in review before her, like the fair face of heaven, when a summer wind hurries the light clouds across its vault of azure. And whether,—as the incidents of her tale moved, her gentle soul,—it appeared animated with hope, flushed with indignation, or pallid with despair; still, in every change, like the heaven it resembled, was that fairest face supremely beautiful.

During the narration, a perfect stillness reigned around, save when (giving vent to his uncontrollable feelings) the father occasionally burst into ejaculations of rage and indignation. In concluding, the fair girl raised her beaming eyes to his, and exclaimed :—“ It is all past,

dearest father ! Let us bless God that we are yet safe and together."

The knight clasped her to his bosom, and pressing his quivering lips to her forehead, left thereon—precious bequest!—a father's tear. "And now," he said, turning to the stranger, "in what terms can I express, señor, my boundless gratitude for the zealous charity and prowess, that hath preserved my cherished and only child? If indeed——"

The stranger hastily interrupted him. Starting with a heavy sigh, as if aroused from a painful reverie, he said :—"Waste not the time, señor, in overrating the service to which Providence appointed me. To estimate it by the excellence of this noble lady, were to do me far too much honour. The day wears,—if, as I gather from what I hear, you are hastening into Portugal, and will accept my guidance, I can promise to conduct ye to the convent of Carmelitos Descalcoz.* This sterile region will then be past,

* Barefooted Carmelites.

and you may thence easily procure a guide to the nearest religious house on the opposite frontier."

More he was about to say, but Inez, who had turned her listening face towards the speaker, suddenly exclaimed:—"Alas, señor, what do I see!—thou art wounded!"

The eyes of all were now directed towards the arm of the stranger, whence was slowly distilling, through the joints of his brassards, continuous drops of blood. Gaspar instantly darted to his side, and with trembling anxiety removed the faithless steel, which had been splintered in the late conflict. The sleeve of a pale blue gambison of quilted satin was unlaced, and Inez, (to whom the task of dressing the wound incurred in her service, of right devolved,) having been supplied by Perez, from a secret recess in the alforga, with an odorous balsam, poured it into the wound, which, though deep, was of trifling importance, and with gentlest care bound up the limb in her embroidered kerchief.

And now, Gaspar, Perez, and the troopers sought the fallen knight, intending to bring him to the cavern. But when returning through a circuitous but comparatively commodious path which they had discovered, they brought the destriers and the lady's jennet, and declared he was nowhere to be found ; it was concluded that as the litter had likewise disappeared, he had probably been removed by his friends the Gitani. Rather relieved than otherwise by the circumstance, they all hastened to partake of the morning meal ; and rejoicing to leave a spot rendered hateful by so many perils, with cheerful hearts resumed their journey.

Their route still lay amidst the frightful passes of the sierra, and was conducted with a caution befitting troubled times, and a border land between hostile countries, whither the strong arm of the law seldom extended from either side. Perez took the lead, under the superintendence of the stranger, and acting as scout, kept a considerable distance a-head of his

companions ; his scrutinizing glances being ever cast around with a ceaseless vigilance, which proved him not unfamiliar with the duties of his post. The rear was occupied by the men who led the sumpter mules ; and in the intermediate space rode Inez, beside her father, and followed by Sanchiza. The black knight—as from the colour of his armour he had become already designated—kept in no place long. Sometimes he gave directions to Perez, at others exhorted the followers to vigilance in case a sudden attack from bandalero, or the emissaries of their late foe, should surprise them ; and occasionally he joined Inez and her father, and relieved the tedium of the way with animated conversation, in which, though audible to the lady, she forbore to share. In all the various services so gracefully rendered, the knight was followed by many a grateful thought, not unmingled with conjectures which would fain have guessed the name and station of one who joined in his person the perfect symmetry of earliest manhood, with the

stately air of one habituated to command. One thing in particular was remarked,—in every movement he made, the knight was closely attended by his squire, who ever preserved with scrupulous exactness the same distance between them, apparently observing, of all the party, only him to whom belonged his unremitting duty.

They had continued for a long time toiling with such poor speed as they could command along their mountain way, and the black knight was minutely explaining to Perez some peculiarity in their route, when Sanchiza approaching more nearly to her mistress, who had hitherto enshrined herself in her veil, with the familiar respect of a favoured domestic, whispered to her : “ If I might presume to utter my poor thoughts, señora, I would suggest somewhat respecting you stranger.”

“ Speak, and welcome, Sanchiza. I doubt not thou art weary of keeping silence.”

“ Ah, then, how easy is it to perceive, in spite

of his armour, that yon knight is neither old nor ill-favoured."

"Indeed!" quoth Inez, wondering in truth how her woman could fancy that any one entertained a doubt on the subject; "that is indeed a shrewd conjecture. Truly thou wert not only bewitched in the Gitani's cave, but likewise invested with wondrous faculties, since thou canst see so easily through all disguises."

"Thou art jesting at my fears, señora. But they have vanished now; I can well believe that all the witchery was concealed in the wine, of which, hadst thou partaken, they had spirited thee out of thy rugged bower, as easily as they did me. But, dear lady, forgive me!—I meant not to recal the horrors of this morning."

"Ah, Holy Virgin!" exclaimed the shuddering Inez, "from what fate have I been rescued! But allude to those scenes no more, Sanchiza,—rather, if silence be irksome to thee, explain the magic which has rendered the steel vizor of my preserver transparent."

"Oh, all my craft is explained in a moment ; —but surely thou also must have observed that stray curl of glossy raven hair which has escaped between the knight's helm and gorget ?"

"I'faith, I grant thee all the merit of the important discovery."

"Were he not so distant, thou mightest even now perceive it ; but at least thou canst remark how gallantly he governs his steed ; no slight practice hath he had in the lists. And behold ! he bends his head to converse with Perez ! Why, señora, Perez is a Castilian born, and of no mean height either among his own countrymen ; yet this stranger o'ertops him far."

"Doeest thou not perceive that he is mounted on a taller charger ?"

"Ah, señora, the difference is trifling,—he is certainly a Castilian."

"Another guess, Sanchiza ?"

"Aye, indeed, and very nigh the truth ; for well thou knowest that no people can compare

with those of Castile for stateliness and symmetry."

"Thou art a shrewd observer, girl," said Inez thoughtfully, "and thy words worth weighing well. Should it be as thou supposest, he must know my father, and—but no matter—could I for one moment doubt him?—no, no; our trust is placed safely now. But granting thou hast drawn just conclusions from his stature and bearing, of what hath the lock of hair which thy piercing eyes discovered informed thee?"

"Ah, señora, it is not so difficult to obtain a glimpse of it; hadst thou not been so closely veiled, it could scarcely have escaped thyself. And in truth, I know not of what more certain information thy veil may have deprived thee, for several times the knight approached, as if anxious to address thee; but fancying, I presume, that thy morning orisons were not ended, he, as became a Christian knight, ventured not to disturb them."

"And if it were so, Sanchiza, thinkest thou

I could even yet have offered sufficient thanks to Heaven for my present safety ! Well, I grant that the knight is certainly not old ; but thou hast yet to prove that he is not ill-featured."

"If we might remove the helmet, I would not fear to do so."

"Art thou speaking from conjecture still ?" asked Inez earnestly.

"Yes, señora ; for never was repulsive face surrounded by such clustering curls. How easy is it to imagine the noble brow and expressive eyes that must correspond with that raven hair."

"So thou hast already forgotten the black locks of the Gitani," replied Inez with a smile.

"Why, señora, as well mightest thou compare them,—all dull, lank, and ragged as they are,—with the raven's glossy breast ; aye, as well liken the silken braids on thine own fair brow to the sooty roof of their dingy dwelling."

The lady smiled, but had not time to reply, for the black knight, who had concluded his conference with Perez, and reined in his charger to

let the party pass, was now beside Donna Inez.

Sanchiza instantly drew behind her mistress, whom the warrior with a courteous salutation, for the first time during the journey, addressed : “ May I hope, señora, that the time is not ill chosen for mentioning a subject of some moment ? ” His soft and mellow accents were pitched at so low a tone as to lose in a great measure the hollow sound acquired by the voice in passing through a closed vizor. Inez besought him to proceed ; and as he obeyed, fancied she had never heard words clothed so musically. “ I would ask, señora, if yon false knight is known to thee ? ”

“ Alas ! I know him well.”

“ Yet I observed, that in relating the events of this morning, his name never once escaped thee, not even when it would have afforded a most welcome solution of thy father's doubts. Believe me, lady, I desire not to learn thy motives for this silence ; I seek but to be warned, if it be

intentional. Inquiries have been made of me, and such as are not easily evaded, for to me the base hound is no stranger; and but for having remarked thy reserve, I should not have hesitated to reveal his name."

"O, thanks! a thousand thanks!" exclaimed Inez eagerly; "by this considerate prudence thou hast preserved my only parent—perhaps from death—and proved thyself well worthy of my confidence. One question, señor,—art thou from Castile?"

"No."

"Then thou owest no allegiance to its sovereign?"

"Forbid it, Heaven! No claim hath he on me."

"And rightly do I deem that whoever thou art, sir knight, the hapless fugitives from his unprovoked vengeance may safely trust thee. Behold in my venerable sire, one, whose sole requital for having aided him in his numerous wars, is the plunder of his wide domains, and the loss

for ever of his native land. Unhappy exiles are we, señor, who seek to find in Lisbon protection and a home. And if, as thou sayest, Don Peter de Caelho, Count d'Ercillia, is well known to thee, I have said enough to explain the reason of my silence respecting him ; since, were my father's ire provoked against that powerful Portuguese, all hope of a resting place in his country were at an end.

“ Doest thou then believe that thy sire's indignation could reach so lofty a spot as that occupied by the dreaded favourite of Alphonso ?”

A bright flush passed over the lady's features, and Heaven's lightning flashed from her dark eyes, as gazing haughtily on the closed vizor beside her, she replied,—“ Aye, sir knight, or to the very throne whereon that monarch sitteth. He who dreams that Don Sebastian de—— but hold.” She suddenly paused,—the curved lip resumed its wonted expression of tranquil sadness,—the beautiful cheek lost its brightness, and the eye its fire. “ Alas !” she murmured, “ what avails the

pride of birth and glorious ancestry!—we are only exiles now!” After a moment’s pause, she continued,—“Ah, señor, my feelings would have hurried me to the utterance of my father’s name; forgive me if—though nothing doubting thee—I am silent on all that concerneth him.”

“It was not of Don Sebastian I sought to speak,” replied the knight; “rather would I learn what claims Caelho hath on the regards of Donna Inez.”

“None, señor; none, save those of a discarded suitor,” replied the lady earnestly. “It is true that my father willed me to be his, provided he won my esteem; but no feeling could he awaken in *this* heart save dislike and fear.”

“Fear!”

“Aye, señor,—strange as it may seem to thee, that a lover could alarm the woman he professed to adore,—it was even so. A shuddering horror ever drove me from his presence, and all my efforts sufficed not to prevent his perceiving the

extreme abhorrence in which I held him: Oh, gladly did I hear of the long deferred departure of Donna Constanza to her betrothed lord, for the count was one of the embassy who came to escort her to Lisbon. But on the eve—ah, what a fearful sigh!—Señor, thy wound afflicts thee!” suddenly exclaimed Inez, as a half-smothered groan burst from the bosom of her companion.

“No, lady,” he faintly answered; “my trifling hurt was well nigh forgotten. I pray thee resume thy recital,—it renders me oblivious of cares that weigh heavily on my spirit.”

A glance of wondering pity rested for a moment on the closed helmet of the knight, as though it would fain have read the stranger's heavy thoughts, even through his mask of steel,—then with a sigh Donna Inez continued: “On the eve of Caelho's departure for Lisbon, he made a last but vain attempt to change my fixed resolve; and as he quitted my bower, dared to murmur indistinct threats. I well remember that I

smiled at his dark hints of vengeance, scorning that he should behold my father's child moved by the frenzy of his wounded pride ; but so fearfully were his words enforced by the fiendish look with which he left my presence, that never afterwards could I recall their threatening import without a shudder. Nor can I forget that from the time when the Princess wedded the Infant of Portugal, my father's favour with his suzerain began to wane. But I dare not say more, señor. I have told thee all that concerns myself alone,—the remainder of my history is also my father's."

"Knowest thou, lady, that this foe,—whose *will* to work thee wrong hath been plainly manifested this day,—hath by his cunning, flattery, and obsequiousness, obtained the entire confidence of his sovereign ? Alas, that it should be the fate of Portugal to quail beneath the will of a base minion ! but true it is, señora,—even those of royal blood, care not to thwart the imperious favourite. Surely Lisbon is, of all places, the one least likely to afford thee a peaceful abiding place ?"

“ Yet to change my father's purpose I must discover his foe, and that would be to risk his life, on which mine own doth hang. Ah, señor, it surely will not be difficult for us to dwell in a populous city unobserved : Yes, rather than peril my father's safety, I will adventure it : Good angels be my guard !”

“ Should thy resolve hold, señora, thou wilt find it not difficult to secure the protection of the queen ; she is most easy of access, and the beloved of all hearts. Believe me, thou mayest yet need powerful aid :—Caelho is not the man to entertain a design about the success of which he is indifferent ; or to relinquish a pursuit that he has thought proper to commence. Think of this, Donna Inez, for in thus advising thee, I am not without hopes of being able to secure thee the notice of Donna Beatrix. But behold, Don Sebastian addresses us.”

During the prolonged conversation between Inez and her champion, the country through

which they slowly rode had, though still mountainous, relaxed somewhat of its sternness. Here and there patches of verdure began to appear in the sheltered valleys, and a few stunted pines and dwarfish cork trees occasionally relieved the sterile scenery. Inez, directed by the remark of the knight, perceived that her father had paused, and was pointing to a Moorish tower seated like the nest of a vulture on the very pinnacle of a lofty crag. It was dismantled and tenantless ; and though the expulsion of its original occupants was at that time an event of comparatively recent occurrence, yet was the lonely building rapidly hastening to decay, and already regarded by the birds and animals of the wilderness as their own.

As the travellers mounted a path which wound around the tower-crowned cliff, a distant sound of tinkling bells caught their ears, and shortly afterwards they heard the mellow voice of the muleteer, as with a long drawn cadence he chanted his rude and simple ballad. The sounds

were hailed with pleasure, for they betokened an approach towards civilized life ; and all eyes were eagerly turned to catch the first sight of the arriero. Soon they beheld him seated sideways on his stout mule, and closely followed by his steady caravan ; who constantly admonished by the numerous bells around the neck of their leader's gaily caparisoned beast, were in no danger of separating from him in their long journey. The cheerful arriero was a dark sunburnt Gallician of low statue, and clean-made, sinewy limbs ; and there was an expression of honest courtesy in the grave salutation with which he greeted the travellers. "*Va usted con Dios caballero*,"* he said ; to which the others made the customary reply,—*Dios guarde à usted*.†

The mules were fancifully decorated, having head-bands, bridles, and saddle-cloths ornamented with gay tufts of worsted, and gaudy tassels ; while around their necks hung bells, figas,‡ and

* God be with you, cavaliers.

† God guard you.

‡ Amulets.

various trappings ; and it was impossible to behold the sleek animals without feeling that each was regarded with affection by his humble master.

The latter,—and indeed every individual, who, seeking safety in the guidance of the experienced arriero, and in the protection of numbers, travelled under the escort of the mule-train,—was well provided with weapons of various kinds ; for their way was perilous, and few passed them without breathing a fervent prayer for their safe and prosperous journey. The long caravan of the sierras passed slowly on, but long after it had disappeared along the winding track, the sonorous tones of the muleteer, as he beguiled the tedium of the way with his simple ditty, was wafted at intervals to the ears of the travellers.

And now at every turn in their route the scenery became less wild,—the cork trees enjoyed more luxuriant growth, the dark pines clothed the hill sides with sombre verdure, and occasionally some clear mountain stream made an Eden of the sheltered valley through which it strayed.

On some spots the ground myrtle overspread their path, and its leaves, crushed by the horses' hoofs, diffused a pleasing odour around; whilst in others the soft green herbage formed a carpet, viewed by the weary beasts with wistful eyes.

The air too became more mild, the sun's rays no longer tempered by the sharp mountain breezes, began to oppress the traveller; and at length became scarcely less fervid than they had found them in the plains of Castile. The hour of noon approached; and perhaps there was not one of the little party but longed for the hospitable convent which they believed to be not far distant.

In one of the verdant and sheltered valleys through which the mules drew unwilling steps, they found a small oratory, excavated in the rock, within which a simple representation of the great work of redemption had been rudely sculptured by unskilful but pious hands. Before it the travellers dismounted to spend a few moments in meditation and prayer,—nor, though in

haste, believed the brief time lost that was devoted to heavenly thoughts.

Ere remounting, the black knight addressed Don Sebastian. "The convent of Caremelitos Descalçoz, to which I promised to guide ye, señor, lies but a short distance to the south, near to the Spanish fortress of Cedo-feita." The veteran started, but the stranger calmly continued: "Both are concealed from us by this small range of hills, the termination of which we can now perceive, and a few miles to the north-west is the frontier fortress of Portugal, the Torres de San Joas. You are doubtless aware, señor, of the customary forms required by the alcaldes of these strong-holds; they will cause you considerable delay, and if you are anxious to enter Portugal as soon as possible, it would not be difficult, by missing both, to pass at once the frontiers. Our friends exhibit little appearance of fatigue; and an hour's rest in this secluded valley will be sufficient refreshment for the cattle. By making a slight detour to the

north we may reach the Portuguese convent of Benedictines on the confines of Estramadura by sunset ; and if you can rely on my knowledge of the country, I fear not to conduct you thither."

Don Sebastian listened with evident anxiety, and with some hesitation replied,—“ I confess, señor, that thy suggestion is, for many reasons, most convenient to me. I am indeed anxious to pass the frontier, and that without approaching the Spanish fortress ; for its alcalde, the stern Don Manuel d'Avorez, I know well. But I fear—” and he regarded with a troubled countenance the delicate girl whose eager attention to the conversation enabled him to remark that her fair cheek was growing pale with fatigue and anxiety.

“ Fear nothing, dear father,” she exclaimed, rightly interpreting his hesitation,—“ nothing, save the danger of falling into the hands of thy enemies. O, believe me, one half hour's rest will enable me to resume my journey refreshed and strengthened.”

“ Bless thee, my gallant girl ! then be it so,” he replied with a heavy sigh,—“ alas ! that my unblest fate should compel thee, sweet one, to endure hardships so unsuited to thy gentle nature.”

The despondent tones of her father summoned from Inez cheering smiles and blithesome words of hope, by which she strove to beguile him of the gloom that was weighing on his spirit. Nor unsuccessfully,—and the horses and mules being led to the most shaded spot in the little valley, wide cloaks were extended on the short herbage, and a rustic repast spread before the wanderers.

CHAPTER VI.

“The very sepulchres of the monks were made to convey a lesson enforcing the peculiar obligations of their state of life, to be placid, merciful, and pacific. A monastic life is simply a Christian life according to the precepts and councils of Christ. The austerity and sincere piety of the primitive ages remained in *them* after zeal and charity had grown cold elsewhere; and a degree of perfection which it would have been impossible to realize in ordinary society. They were not the invention of caprice, but the remains of ancient manners, preserved while the rest of the world had undergone a prodigious change.”

THE travellers safely crossed a steep and unfrequented path pointed out by the black knight, which led through a very labyrinth of small abrupt hills and narrow valleys; and possessed not even the advantage that had hitherto aided their mountain journey, of having its ruggedness somewhat smoothed by the occasional passage of

the mule-train. As, however, it was the only way whereby they would escape the strict scrutiny of the dreaded Cedo-feita, its difficulties were patiently surmounted, and its toils uncomplainingly endured. The hour of sunset was drawing nigh, as they entered a narrow gorge,—it could not be called a road,—between two lofty and abrupt precipices. Fragments of rock, and immense wave-worn boulders were strewn throughout the ravine, marking it as the bed of those torrents which in winter rush with such violence from the sierras, and now obstructing the way, so as to render it almost impassable. Soon were the horsemen compelled to dismount, and carefully guide the wearied beasts; and the black knight entrusting his steed to the charge of Gaspar, walked beside the palfrey of Donna Inez, which heedlessly picked its steps along the broken road, being, as its dim eyes and drooping head plainly shewed, over fatigued and spiritless. He held the silken rein with a firm hand, in aid of the exhausted creature's failing strength, and

strove to animate it with his cheering voice—nor neglected at the same time to encourage its fair rider.

“Soon will these toils be past, lady; and thy father in safety”—he softly said; “even now we are leaving Spain behind.”

“Blessed be God!” Inez faintly sighed, still keeping her veil closely around her, lest Don Sebastian should mark her extreme fatigue. The pent-up atmosphere of the confined path which a few hours before had been heated by the perpendicular rays of noon, and into which the just awakening breezes of evening had not yet penetrated, aided in no trifling degree to render her faint and unnerved; and the frequent stumbles of her tottering palfrey, whilst they kept her in constant apprehension of a severe fall, shook most painfully her wearied frame.

For more than a mile the horrid pass extended, and when at length they approached its termination, every heart sunk, and every eye was turned in wondering fear upon their guide; for a

rock of granite, high as the precipice on the right and left, and apparently connecting them without the slightest break, appeared to bar all further progress.

"Fear not, my friends," exclaimed the youth, to whose knowledge of the country they had implicitly trusted,—“to the left is our way.”

A few more paces onward, and they descried in that direction a narrow opening, through the very heart of the rock, originally perhaps a mere fissure formed by some throes of nature, but now worn by the winter torrents so as to admit the passage of a mounted horseman. The black knight led the way into the gloomy chasm, still guiding the lady's palfrey; Don Sebastian kept also beside her; and the rest, though not without some misgivings, were fain to follow. After a few windings, a short but precipitous descent, which the timely warning of their guide enabled them to pass without accident, brought them into a spacious cavern, the floor of which was strewn with a deep layer of triturated granite.

A small stagnant pool in its centre, was all that remained of the torrent that had last gushed thence into the plain, a glimpse of which being now caught by the travellers, through a wide opening, put an end to all doubts and fears. With all speed they approached the narrow outlet, which barely sufficed for the passage of the large-limbed destriers ; and beheld widely spread before them, a lovely country, all fertile, fair, and smiling. A cool fresh breeze met them as they gazed, invigorating their drooping strength, and saluting them as with a cheering welcome ; and if they failed to guess that they were at length entering the land in which they sought a refuge and a home, they were soon assured thereof ; for pointing, after a moment's pause, to the blooming prospect, the black knight exclaimed :—" The frontier is past, my friends ! it is Portugal you behold ! "

They gazed, silent and thankful,—wondering too that so beautiful a district should be found on the very verge of the frightful and sterile wilderness they had just escaped.

A verdant and gentle slope alone remained between them and the fair and fragrant valley, over which the setting sun threw his slanting beams, tender and regretful, like the last lingering looks of a departing friend.

Far and wide the plain extended, gently undulating but unbroken by hill or valley. Vast forests of pine spread their dense masses of dark foliage for many a league across it, sometimes extending to the very horizon, whilst gigantic cork trees and stately cedars were scattered here and there ; or mingled with the glittering evergreens, and graceful cypresses of Portugal, formed variously tinted groves. Plantations of the pale olive contrasted beautifully with the darker verdure of the vineyards that extended to the very base of the sierra on which the travellers stood ; approaching them indeed so nearly, that the ripening harvests of the bending boughs was discernible beneath their shining leaves.

The white walls of several small hamlets with

their humble spires dotted the plain, and the—silver links of a winding river crossed it, occasionally loitering, vagrant-like, among its loveliest scenes, and bending again and again to visit each lowly village.

“It is a beautiful land!” exclaimed Inez, mournfully, as her sad eyes dwelt on each feature in the extensive landscape:—“It is a fair and sunny land,—but not my country!” and drawing once more her veil before her face, she relapsed into silence.

“Fairest lady!” said the stranger, “though not the favoured land of thy birth, it is as hospitable as it is lovely; and the generous race who inhabit it, shame not their brave and gallant ancestors who rescued it from the cruel bondage of the Moors. The daring prowess and unsullied honour of her sons, have already gained for their country a distinguished place among the nations; on her shores science and learning are welcomed from every land, and the hardy spirit of adventure that animates her people, may one

day claim a world's gratitude. Yes, let me hope that thou wilt find among those with whom thou art about to dwell, some not unworthy the esteem of even a daughter of chivalrous Castile !”

As the voice of the stranger ceased, the faint sound of a distant bell floated on the hushed and balmy air ; and, modulated by the breeze that grew stronger as the day yet more and more declined, with a soft and sighing cadence, reached the yet pausing travellers.

“ Listen !” said the black knight, “ it is the welcome that hails your entrance into your adopted country !” and as he spoke, he pointed to a gently rising ground whereon appeared the white walls of the peaceful dwelling whence the gentle sounds arose.

“ It is our house of refuge, my father !” exclaimed Inez, “ let us join our prayers with those of the good religious as we proceed !”

All now distinguished the humble monastery

and with hearts overflowing with thankfulness obeyed the summons of the Angelus bell.

The very beasts appeared aware that rest and refreshment were at hand, and with the well-known sagacity of their kind, once more arched the drooping neck, and summoned their remaining strength to accomplish the small portion of their journey yet before them.

And soon the exiles passed betwixt dismantled corn-fields, whose harvests, now secured, were not too closely nipt for the sake of the gleaner,—for it was monastic ground ; and groups of merry children, returning home with their mothers, laden with precious store for winter days, presented the first words of pious greeting that saluted them.

Behold them now at the gates of the hospitable convent, where warmest sympathy is in an instant extended to their manifold wants. No practised eye calculates the chances of remuneration, and thereto proportions its civility ; but

every face is that of a friend and brother; and a welcome, briefly spoken, but most deeply felt, receives the wanderers.

The chief ornament of the edifice was found in the venerable expression which pervaded its simple and unassuming style; and its only pretensions to architectural beauty consisted in that,—without which there is no beauty in architecture,—the adaptation of all its parts to the particular uses for which they were designed. Within its spacious porch was assembled a crowd of hapless beings, who from accident, or sickness, or the extreme of youth or age, were incapable of procuring a livelihood. Some, seated on the benches, surely disposed of their evening meal, others ~~am~~ed it away for a sick parent or child, while the remainder were either receiving or patiently awaiting the plentiful dole, bestowed and accepted with blessings. Happy alms! ungrudgingly given, and received without degradation! where shall the poor of a nation that has lost its monastic almoners, turn for assistance without

losing the privileges and inalienable rights of free-born and Christian beings! Happy alms! given for the love of Him who said, "Whatsoever ye do unto the poor in my name ye do unto me;" and received as from His hand whose providence had ordained that they should be as helpless and as tenderly administered to as the raven's young. O glorious picture of perfect charity! whereof it is difficult to say whether the needy and thankful suppliant, or the equally poor and humble almoner was most blessed!

The porch led to the court of the convent, which was surrounded by apartments and accommodations for guests; but as the party passed beneath it, the black knight and his squire paused under the deep archway, and held for some time whispered converse. Donna Inez having entered with her friends, had been assisted from her palfrey, and was following the guest-brother towards the hospitium, when she perceived the two horsemen still conversing beneath the gateway, where their figures intercepted

the rays of the setting sun. Ere her momentary glance was withdrawn, the knight started from the side of Gaspar, and hastily advancing towards the lady, sprung from his horse and spoke.

"Thou art now in security, señora, and my duty is done."

"Right well, and nobly, O generous knight, hast thou aided a hapless lady in her peril; and may the intercession and blessings of her who is the model and protectress of womanhood,—of the mother of the motherless,—ever avert evil from thy path!"

The knight, lowly bending his helmed head, replied,—“Though I may not attend thee farther, fair Inez, my influence shall not yet entirely forsake thee. A week’s refreshment is allowed by the good brothers to guests who after a prolonged journey, arrive at their hospitable dwelling; though to ordinary travellers but three days. You will do well to avail yourselves of this utmost indulgence, for a fatiguing journey

is yet between you and the capital. When you quit this spot, as it may perhaps happen that a friend's counsel or even aid might be useful, behold ! I have thought of a means whereby I may yet avail you. Perez is well skilled in the art of venerie,—far less time than we have spent together in our mountain journey had sufficed to assure me it is so,—should danger hereafter menace you, let him blow three motts on this horn, and instant succour shall be at hand." As he concluded the knight slipped the small hunting bugle from his neck, and placed it in the hand of Inez. "And now, señora, farewell. If I have appeared not unworthy of thy remembrance, perhaps — occasionally — in thy prayers,—thou wilt remember one, on the hopes of whose youth misfortune hath set her darkest seal !"

Tears rushed to the eyes of Inez, for the touching sadness of his musical voice pained her very soul ; but her features were veiled, and extending her hand she murmured,—“Assure thy-

self, señor, of my fervent prayers; but—may I ask by what name I shall commend thee to Heaven's care?"

The knight had withdrawn his gauntlet, and having taken the proffered hand, and raised the fair and slender fingers to the cruciform opening in his helm, he replied to her tremulous words: "By any that will signify the estimation of which the noble Inez believes me deserving;" then once more saluting her with a profound obeisance, retired.

The small court which the apartments for the guests surrounded, did not, strictly speaking, form a part of the monastery; but not the less did the travellers, as they entered its precincts, feel for the first time since they left their homes, that they might repose in security. The care of charger, or palfrey, or burthened mule, was not permitted to the wayfarers; and after a simple meal, at which the meek religious waited on their guests, each was glad to seek the couch of fragrant herbs, spread for them by the hands of

those who though strangers by country, and customs, and language,—were brothers by faith and an all-embracing charity.

Calmly and peacefully passed the happy hours spent in that home of tranquil and cheerful thoughts; for having on the day following their arrival agreed on a uniform system of devotion, they conformed as nearly as possible from sunrise till sunset to the rules of the monastery; a portion of its church, as well as a part of the dwelling being devoted to the use of such pious laics as might find it needful.

Shortly after dawn, therefore, on each succeeding day, did the knight and his followers, the lady and her maid, enter the church, (on the adornment of which the community had expended all their superfluous means,) and amidst the faithful who assembled there, commence with the great and solemn act of Christian worship, the duties of the day. With the majestic basilic,—the stately church,—or even with many a village fane,—this small and remote edifice could

not **hope** to vie; but throughout the sacred building one sweet and intense mark of reverent affection was seen and felt. It was that scrupulous attention to the most minute order and neatness, which is ever remarkable in the churches of religious houses; for not from a mere mechanical habit, or in obedience to the orders of superiors, but because the decoration of the church is a labour of love, are their flowers ever fresh, and the intrusive dust never suffered to collect over screen or tomb, symbol or shrine. Behold! as the first rays of the ascending sun come in through the tall lancet windows of the sanctuary, softened though not dimmed in passing through the storied panes, which the brotherhood have afforded only for this holiest part of the holy place,—as those joyous beams come streaming in through emblems and representations of sufferings and sorrows and most sacred wounds that sufficed to redeem a sinful world,—and illuminate with gem-like glory the sacred place, so that the ever-burning lamp, which at the

midnight hour of matins was the solitary star of the solemn fane, dwindles away to a mere speck of light:—behold ! even now at this early hour, through the open portal,—which will not close again till the lamp of the sanctuary is again in the ascendant,—come the pious worshippers. There see a patient gleaner, on her way to secure the ears of corn left for her by the ungrudging husbandman, ask a blessing on her humble quest,—there the toil-bowed farmer returns thanks for the bounteous harvest,—the hardy muleteer leaves his cattle before the porch, whilst he implores protection on his perilous journey,—the market-woman has alighted from her albarda,* to offer up to the Creator the first hour of her day of toil,—the meek mendicant presents his hapless case to the father of the poor,—labourers and cottagers, with their little ones beside them (some kneeling with clasped hands and downcast eyes, others at play on the

* An easy kind of saddle.

marble floor, but all hushed into silence by the reverence of those around them,) place themselves in the hands of Providence, and cheerfully acquiesce in their appointed lot of labour and privation. Amidst such groups as these, kneel the warrior, and noble damsel, and stern troopers, around the revered altar; and every bended knee, whether robed in velvet or cased in steel,—wrapt in coarse serge, or bare of meanest covering,—alike uncushioned presseth the floor of the house of God!

The very atmosphere of the sacred dwelling is redolent with peace, which falls like a healing balm upon the crushed and wounded heart. From its favoured precincts every discordant sound is banished:—no noise of grinding labours, no clashing of angry steel, no plaint of wailing, no cry of alarm, no growl of fierce and hell-conceived oaths; instead of these horrors, (alas for fallen man! so common in the world) silence,—not that of the desert,—but of hushed and contemplative hu-

manity, reigns around ! At times the melodious chant breaks this reverent stillness, and the full-toned choir replies. Through the long-drawn aisles the cadence reverberates, and as its dying murmurs softly linger, brings to mind the assertions of sainted composers, that they had only transcribed airs which angels had sung to them in celestial visions !

The early mass is finished,—the priest bestows his blessing on the prostrate crowd, and after a short pause, the greater proportion of the congregation disperse. Then might be seen the cheerful morning greeting, the humble alms, the “ God speed ye ! ” to the traveller, and the brief conference of courteous neighbours. They all depart ;—and are not the days of toil passed more cheerily, the privations of the hour borne more resignedly, the gifts of Providence bestowed more freely, the dangers of perilous occupations encountered more courageously, the trials of life wrestled with more hopefully—

When the primal hour of every day is thus devoted to His service, to whom we owe the gift of each succeeding dawn !

CHAPTER VII.

"But what will not ambition and revenge
Descend to? Who aspires, must down as low
As high he soared; obnoxious first or last
To basest things."

Paradise Lost.

RETURN we now, after an absence of several days, to the cave of the Gitani. It was night : and the fire of fragrant pine-wood,—even as when it offered such treacherous refuge to the fugitives whom we have accompanied to the convent, cast around its lurid and fitful light, flashing on the nearer objects with an unearthly gleam, but unable to dispel the gloom of the deep recesses of the cavern. Around it were scattered in various attitudes, several of the dusky-browed Egyptians, and as the red glare

of the blazing fagots played on their gaudy and fantastic dresses, their rugged features, lank and straggling locks, and fiery eyes—and betrayed that look of ill-omened cunning so peculiar to the *Romany* ; it presented a scene as wild and stern and fearful, as the frowning mountain wherein they had chosen a congenial dwelling.

Nor was their sinister expression entirely confined to this untamed race, for one was there—reclining a little apart from the rest, on a rude but not unusual couch formed of rushes strewed beneath a wide spread cloak,—who though of far different lineage, was yet nearly allied to the vagrants in traits of countenance and of heart. A pallid hue overspread his features, but they were too marked to be mistaken by any who had once beheld *Caelho* ; and now, more than ever, his fierce eyes revealed the untamed passions that agitated his breast.

It was evident that the *Gitani* had bestowed their cares upon his wound, for one of their

gaudy turbans had been unrolled and wrapped around his head, contrasting strangely, all blood-stained as it was, with the superb crimson gambeson of quilted satin, which was his outer vest,—his steel hauberk having been removed.

Disappointment, and shame, and inextinguishable rage, were depicted in his pale visage, and agitated his limbs with uneasy motions ; and, as if seeking in his impotence, some object on which to vent his fury, he broke forth occasionally into passionate invectives on those who had foiled his plans, and those who had shared them.

“ I tell ye, hounds !” he muttered, continuing a conversation which hitherto, however, had been confined to himself—“ if ye had possessed the spirit of the very dogs of Lisbon, who will fight to the death over a mouldering bone, I had driven that officious knight-errant and his squire over the cliff. By my knighthood !” and his eyes glistened with savage exultation at the bare thought—“ they had formed dainty fare for the

mountain eagles !—it had been but fair reprisal to amuse the lady Inez with the sight of the gaunt wolves contending for their carcasses.”

Stung by the reproach, Hamet ventured, in expostulating tones, to reply :—“ Never believe, señor, that our aid would have secured thee such a triumph. If we had interposed, thou wouldst only have seen us swept down by their huge two-handed swords, like grass before the mower.

We wear neither steel cuirass nor morion, nor protection for limb or visage ;—and thinkest thou they would have carried the boasted courtesy of knighthood so far as to indulge us in our whim of finding chinks in their armour ?”

“ Hamet says truth,” rejoined another of the tribe. “ Besides, señor, it formed no part of our compact to interfere in thy quarrels with strangers. We undertook solely to guide the lady and her escort to our cavern, and terrify them with some rude and threatening language, in order that, by coming to the rescue, thou

mightest gain the confidence of the travellers, and so make use of their gratitude for the furtherance of thy designs. Was it not so, señor?"

Caelho made no reply, but fixed his glowering eyes more sternly on the speaker, who might easily have recognised in his compressed lips and the swollen veins of his forehead, the violence of his suppressed emotion.

It was either unperceived, however, or unheeded, for the Gitano proceeded: "Then what say ye, brothers? By the blessed dawn! I think we did our work right well! Even the tempered wine cup," he added, with a grim smile, "had been handed round,—the champion had only to present himself, and behold!—the Gitani were in a moment overcome, and by the mere glitter of his armour, scared from their prey."

A hoarse and eldritch laugh rung through the cavern, and encouraged by the approval of his comrades, and the continued silence of the knight, the speaker continued: "And now,

methinks, it is time that the señor should remember his share of the compact, instead of reproaching us with that which formed no part of it:—**fifty** golden pieces, and no less, if I mistake not, **was** the reward promised, for bringing the exiles **beneath** this roof.”

He **paused**,—glanced around, and read approval **in** every face, though a few looked rather timidly at the knight, as if fearing the consequences of so free a speech. Some score of voices, however, cried out,—“’Tis true! ’tis true!”

“**N**or is this all,” again began the resolute speaker; “for the señor moreover promised us good store of booty:—the alforgas of the strangers were well filled, no doubt; but we were not permitted, according to promise, to satisfy our curiosity in that particular.” Again the applause of his companions resounded through the cavern.

“**P**ease, screech-owls!” at length broke in the knight, unable longer to restrain his rage; “your deafening clamour will drive me mad.” Then

struggling for mastery over his passion, he added in a sneering tone :—" Well, whatever may have been *your* fulfilment of the compact,— behold mine !" —and he threw on the floor a heavy purse, which was instantly picked up by Hamet, and its contents rapidly distributed amongst the tribe. They received it with about as much grace and thankfulness as would a pack of bloodhounds their long deferred meal ; and Caelho looked on with an expression that might have suited their keeper, when watching them tear to pieces their gory provender. " And now," he said, when each had received his share, " you perceive that I have the disposition and the power to reward you well for the services I require. As for the plunder you have missed, it is not not my fault that it was taken from your cave by any hands save your own ; nor will it be, if it is not brought back again. It is yet fair game, if you will follow my directions.—Are ye willing, then, to make one more attempt for the alforgas ?—The old knight is wealthy, and all

his moveable riches,—his money and jewels,—as I before told ye, he carries with him;—for he has left Castile for ever.”

“ ’Tis all very well,” growled the distorted Cloton; “and we can have no objection, so there be no fighting in the matter.”

“ What! art thou afraid of blood?”

“ Not he,” replied Hamet, laughing, “if it be shed in the dark.”

“ Aye, or by a side-blow,” rejoined the miscreant; “but I hate the clash of swords, it is so devilish quarrelsome.”

“ Well, on your own address will depend the facility with which you win the prize; but surely, for the sake of such a golden harvest, you will not refuse some little risk?”

“ Not we, señor; all of us be not Clotons,” replied one of the vagrants.

“ Then ye will all retire now, save Hamet,” said the knight; “with him I will concert the best plan for regaining the advantages which yon meddling knight rendered bootless.”

The gang instantly left the cavern,—all save Hamet and Cloton ; for the latter, notwithstanding the bidding of the knight, seemed unwilling to be excluded from a share in concocting the new plot. As Caelho motioned for him also to depart, he said,—“ If nothing else may give me a right to share thy counsels, señor, let my hatred of thy intended prize suffice ; for truly I will miss no chance, and grudge no labour to secure her for thee, since 'tis the fate most dreaded by her.”

“ Not now, Cloton ; not now ; the presence of Hamet suffices for my need.—But how hath this young girl provoked thee ?”

“ Did she not,” replied Cloton, with a contortion of his hideous face, that gave to it the malignant expression of a demon ; and bending his shaggy brows till they met in one black mass above his noseless visage,—“ did she not deride this remarkable countenance ?—Aye, by my life's blood ! she dared to be even terrified at its exquisite proportions ! Was not that sufficient pro-

vocation to earn my deadly and life-long hatred ?” He struck his clenched hand against his misshapen face, and with a growl of rage that it were vain to liken to any human tones, rushed from the cavern.

“ ’Tis a very monster, Hamet !” exclaimed the count, gazing after him with loathing and astonishment. “ Choose *him* for a counsellor ! why his mind is as hideous and distorted as his countenance. ’Tis truly wonderful how so foul a being can expect to be looked on with any other feelings than horror and disgust.”

“ Nevertheless, sir knight, any expression of such thoughts is enough to rouse his passions to the wildest phrenzy. He seems to hate all mankind, and with especial malignity such as possess any advantages of person ; but woe to him who draws this hatred upon himself, by manifesting disgust at Cloton’s peculiar graces, for it can be sated only by his destruction.”

Even the callous nature of Caelho shuddered at such a picture of fiendish malevolence ; but it was

only for a moment, for he began to calculate how he might make the vile passions of this wretched being subservient to his own evil designs.

“What knowest thou, Hamet, of his history? surely his mind, however ill constructed by nature, must have been embittered by circumstances, or it would never have attained such an appetite for evil.”

“Thou hast guessed rightly, señor; from his earliest infancy his face has been his torment. He called one of our chiefs his sire, and but for his deformity would have succeeded to his father's authority; but even in the tent of his parents he was but as a rated hound. As he grew up, he became the butt and derision of the whole tribe; and though, when he attained to manhood, his companions learned to fear his strength and cunning, yet nothing would induce them, on his father's death, to receive him as their chief. His disappointment on seeing a stranger to his blood elected in his place, aroused his stormy passions to phrenzy,—he disappeared from amongst us,—and it is only within these few months that he

has rejoined our tribe. This is all I know of his history."

"Ha!" exclaimed Caelho, and extending his broad palms over his eyes, he was absorbed for a while in the intensity of his thoughts. As, however, he continued longer silent than suited the patience of Hamet, the latter spoke again.

"I have been more unreserved with thee, or, than is the habit of our tribe; and since thou hast condescended to be interested in one of our despised race, perhaps another of them may be permitted a few remarks about *thy* plans."

"Come, come," interrupted Caelho with a sneer, "methinks my resources must be low, and my case somewhat desperate, when such as thou essayest the task of adviser to me!—However, say what thou wilt,—I can at least attend or not to thy suggestions, as it listeth me."

"Nay, sir knight, 'tis no such great matter, —but since thou hast chosen me for thy counsellor——"

"Hold!"—exclaimed the haughty noble, re-

garding the swarthy outcast with a gaze of fierce scorn,—“thou art chosen to convey to thy tribe the kind and manner of service they are to render to me—but *thou* my counsellor! no, no, he who can sway the deliberations of a king, needeth not such aid as thine.”

“Why, señor, I would but remind thee of what thou mayest forget in the tumult of thy passions.”

“Say on, then, but beware how thou exceed thy privilege.”

“This maiden whom thou seekest—”

“Must be my wife!”

“Yet thou promisest us all her father’s worldly goods.”

“I do.”

“And can a dowerless bride avail one like thee, save to burthen thine estates, and fix the grasp of the Jew on thy vineyards?”

“Bah, bah!” exclaimed Caelho,—“I see whither thy advice tends. If Don Pedro de Caelho wed the heiress of a ruined family, his vigilant spies will look in vain for a continuation

of their golden spoil. Such are thy thoughts! And canst thou then believeme so very a dreamer, as to be led away by a boyish passion, to the marring of my fortunes? Trust me,—trust me,—I am not so very a fool!—No, 'tis not that passing folly—love, but a far more *constant* passion that bids me to seek this alliance. Once, indeed,”—and his voice grew low, and his thick brows nearly concealed his eyes, as speaking far more to himself than to his companion, by whom, in fact, his incoherent ravings were but dimly comprehended, he continued—“yes, *once* I thought I loved Donna Inez—so young, so innocent, so surpassingly fair!—Aye, and carried away by the fond delusion, I sought her—wooed—stooped to kneel to her,—and, by heaven! the scornful maid refused me! 'Tis true, by my father's soul! the proudest noble in Alphonso's court was spurned by a Castilian girl!—a very child, whom I had supposed, the mere joy of seeing, for the first time, a suitor at her feet, might have won! Yes, if I ever loved, 'twas then—though not, the while, insensible to

her father's wealth,—and she his only child. She rejected me—scorned all my splendid proffers! and deeply did the mortification enter my soul. But ever since that hour,”—and his accents were hoarse, as he muttered with sneering bitterness between his closed teeth, “—ever since then have I most *most lover-like* hovered around her steps—though by her cruelty doomed to remain unseen. And my arts had prospered—nay, but for that accursed stranger—the foul fiend blister him!—had been successful. Have I not driven her from Castile—and lured her into the wilderness by my powerful spells?—Have I not surrounded her there with Gorgons and Chimeras, which well nigh terrified her into mine arms? And though she hath for a while escaped me, I yet will prove that there *is* a passion, compared with which, love—with all its maudlin tears, and vows, and prayers forsooth,—hath neither constancy nor perseverance.”

Hamet started, for as he uttered the last words, Caelho raised his heavy brows, and from beneath their shaggy pent-house his

iniquitous soul peeped forth, with an expression that might be more truly likened to the glance of the arch-fiend, than to aught human ; and the Gitano looked uneasily around, as if regretting that none of his band were near. But the phrenzy was but momentary,—in an instant it had passed away,—and probably experiencing relief from having given vent to some of the venom rankling in his heart, Caelho in a calmer tone continued:—

“ Well, all that concerneth thee to know is this :—Fear not for thy guerdon, for I have a secret to make yon dowerless maiden the wealthiest heiress in Portugal. And now I want the aid of thy cunning and shrewdness to discover who the knight can be, under whose protection the lady placed herself so readily. She must surely know him—what thinkest thou ?”

“ If I had ever seen him before, señor, I doubt not I could satisfy thee, for there are peculiarities belonging to every individual, which only require to be siezed by a keen and observing eye, to render any disguise abortive.”

"Exert thine ingenuity—try what a guess can do."

"He must certainly be of Castile."

"Ha! then thou believest she knew him?"

"I' faith, I know not,—I have often remarked that between similar minds, whether good or evil, a sudden sympathy often will arise, ere either can really know the dispositions of the other; 'tis his stature and stately bearing that make me believe him a Castilian."

"Thou art a shrewd guesser!—and methinks not far from the truth. Some secret worshipper, perhaps, or rather favoured lover,—aye, that were likeliest,—following, to watch over her safety. Fond fool! let me but catch him once again, and the frail insect that strays into my gauntlet is not more securely crushed!"

An almost imperceptible sneer passed over the face of the Gitano. Slight as it was, however, it escaped not the keen and rapid glance of the knight, for he exclaimed, in a voice of thunder: "Thou thinkest, varlet, that my late de-

feat proves him safe from my vengeance! What! because my base steel was unfaithful,—and surprise, and rage, and confidence in my well-tried skill, disarmed me of my wonted caution? Let me but meet him once again—'tis all I ask!”

This sudden burst of mortified vanity over, Caelho resumed his scrutiny concerning his enemies. For some time he continued questioning Hamet; hoping to fix more distinctly on his own mind every trait in the knight or his squire which might enable him to recognize them;—even their steeds were scanned over with most scrupulous exactness.

Whilst they were thus occupied, a Gitano, fatigued and travel soiled, entered the cave. He threw himself on the ground before the fire, and refused a single reply to their eager inquiries, until he had satisfied his hunger.

With impatient looks and gestures, Caelho, who had started to his feet on his appearance, paced the cavern whilst the hungry tra-

veller dismissed his welcome meal, then tossing him a piece of gold, as if to propitiate his good humour, he resumed his seat on his rude couch, and fixing on him a penetrating glance of inquiry, said: "Well Gheran, what hast thou done?" The man on raising his head, after depositing the gold in his sash, displayed a broad cunning face, which was deficient in the saturnine expression of his tribe; for a perpetual smile hovered over his lips and eyes, that bore as near a resemblance to the open laugh of good humour, as might be supposed familiar to the amiable countenance of Satan's jester. A thousand ominous twinkles gathered round his broad mouth, and pursed up his small black eyes, as he replied to the question of his employer.

"I have them—they are on two mules without; but it was with infinite trouble I prevailed on the gang to grant the loan. In truth, I was compelled to part with every piece of gold thou gavest me, señor:—it is true, by the welkin!

every gold piece have I been obliged to give the rascals, for the use of their filthy rags."

"For how many?" exclaimed Caelho.

"Ten, señor; ten," responded Gheran; "five on each mule."

"I bade thee bring at least twenty—and some of the men to boot."

"Aye, aye, but they were too cunning to come,—feared it was a blind,—wouldn't believe Gheran. And as for the disguises—surely, señor, ten men dressed as bandelero, may be a match for four, though a knight be of the number. The Rommany never count women."

"Fool!—there be six men in all;—are not the black knight and his squire in their company?"

"Not now, señor," replied Gheran, grinning more wildly than before; "not now—they left them the morning after they reached the monastery. How they got there is known to the spirit of the winds, I suppose; for though I made all speed, I saw nothing of them on their journey, and by the merest chance discovered that they

had been two days at the holy house when I reached it. By going attired as a beggar, to receive alms, I contrived to learn of one of the troopers who came to witness the distribution of the dole, that they intended to refresh themselves during the whole term permitted by the brotherhood."

"'Tis well," muttered the count, in tones of gloomy satisfaction. Then gathering closer together around the dying embers, the distinctions of birth and rank became forgotten in the eager consultation which followed.

And well might those evil spirits have been believed the dark genii of the wilds, concocting in the deep recesses of the horrid serra some deed of carnage and crime.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt;
Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled;
Yea, even that which mischief meant most harm
Shall, in the happy trial, prove most glory:
But evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with goodness, when at last
Gathered like scum and settled in itself
It shall be in eternal restless change,
Self-fed, and self-consumed."

THE heavy mists of an autumnal morning had disappeared, leaving, as sole evidence of their visit, the fragrant and heavy dews, which sparkling in the warm rays showered over mead, wood, and valley, decked every leaf, and flower, and lowliest weed in splendid coronals ; for the sun made the heavens joyous with his dazzling beams.

The fertile plain, so calmly reposing at the foot of the horrid Sierra de Gata, had resumed with the morning light all its simple loveliness ; luxuriant nature triumphed in its waving groves and verdant meadows ; and rustic manners, grateful, kind, and unpretending, dwelt uncorrupted in its humble hamlets.

The early mass of the Benedictines had been sung, and the pious worshippers bestowed themselves to the duties of the day ; when around the convent porch, an unaccustomed crowd collected. Horsemen, and mules, and men-at-arms, made a scene of bustle and excitement, which, though respectfully subdued, afforded a marked contrast to the wonted quietude of the peaceful dwelling :—It was the party of travellers preparing for their departure. They were all seated, on palfrey, mule, or charger ; and bidding farewell to the good brothers, murmured thanks were exchanged for solemn blessings. As one by one the strangers quitted the porch, the guest-brother presented to each

his simple parting gift. It was a small nosegay of sweet marjoram, gathered from the convent garden; and though bestowed in conformity with ancient usages, was no mere formal act, but accompanied with earnest wishes and fervent prayers for their safety and well-doing. The last blessing having been breathed, the travellers went on their way; and for many a mile, the backward, lingering glance could descry the white walls of the monastery reflecting the beams of the morning sun.

And now safely past the rugged frontier, and escaped the power of Spain, a feeling of security gave cheerfulness to the little party. With renovated strength, and bounding hopes, they for the most part deemed all dangers at an end.

Don Sebastain was (with the exception of his head, which wore the light amuce) still clad in steel, but no longer cumbered with lance or mace. The ample road permitted him to continue by his daughter's side, whilst

Perez, no longer needed as a scout, rode beside Sanchiza; and the way was enlivened by such light and cheerful converse, as is inspired by the pleasure of easy travelling through a delightful country.

For several leagues thus rode they on, the few persons they met, indicating by their costume and manners,—what the fair face of nature, or the observances of religion had failed to remind them of,—that they had entered a foreign land. But the intimation was neither repulsive nor unkind, for the trimly boddiced dames who dozed within their supporting albardos, looked up as they passed with a smiling “God speed ye!” whilst every pedestrian doffed his narrow cap, and even such peasants as they found seated, invariably arose to salute the travellers. Now and then children were seen roaming in the meadows, or intent on some light occupation near the solitary casel,* or clustered cottages. Often a merry

* Farm-house.

imp would approach the lady, and bright with rosy smiles, present a nosegay of wild flowers as a welcome offering; and though a single garment was usually their only covering, the strangers remarked that no symptom of privation appeared in their round, sunburnt limbs, or careless countenances.

To Donna Inez, the scenes of simplicity and peace which surrounded her were a source of tranquil pleasure; yet she sometimes regarded with wistful earnestness some far-off object, until its more near approach distinctly revealed it. Often, too, she glanced at the golden bugle which hung at her girdle,—it may be half wishing to make trial of its potency, and wondering if on some distant height, or concealed in some impervious grove, their promised guardian was even now watching their footsteps.

As noon approached, the travellers turned a little from the road, and halted within a grove of cork trees, the interlaced branches of which permitted no stray beam to scorch the way-

side flowers, or deprive the narrow rill that strayed among them of its delicious coolness. There spread they the wide capote, there opened the condessa, which had been added to their baggage by the monks, and drew from its recesses poultry, and wine, and a few firm fruits. Nor less acceptable than these were some small loaves of the far-famed guest-bread of the monastery, which was sweet and porous, and white as snow. "*Benito sea tal pan!*"* exclaimed Perez, as he laid the delicate loaves before his companions; "the good brothers did not forget that we must perforce take one meal on our way, and they knew that the poor had what provisions remained in our *alforgas* when we arrived at their monastery."

After enjoying their sylvan meal, to the pleasure of which the pure waters of the brook that murmured beside them was no trifling addition, they yet deferred pursuing their journey until the sultry heat had some

* Blessed be such bread.

what abated. Some slumbered on the short turf; while the rest, with half closed eyes, languidly listened to the busy hum of the insect world, which alone, of all living things, appeared to enjoy the fervid rays of noon, and hovering with endless gyrations over the countless flowers, inhaled their faint perfume, or buried themselves deep in their honied recesses. Save such faint murmurs, no sound was heard;—no cheerful voice, no ringing laugh, no joyous shout of merry infancy. The peasant reposed beside his cattle, beneath the embowering trees,—the housewife rested in the coolest chamber of her dwelling,—and the glowing cheek of the little wearied child, lay on the turf, whereon was scattered his playthings, the fainting flowers. The very birds were slumbering in the thickest recesses of the grove, or silently conning over the triumphal or melancholy harmonies with which ere long to make the welkin ring.

Suddenly the breathless stillness was lessened, though not broken, by the toll of a distant

bell, which slowly reverberating through the hushed air, came, like the memory of a sound, to the silent sojourners in the way-side grove. They understood the summons, and arising, covered their faces, and silently joined in the noontide homage to the incarnation of the Saviour !”

“ It is sweet,” said Don Sebastian, as they resumed their seats, “ to join our prayers with theirs ; methinks the voice of that far-off bell cometh to us as a blessing from the house of prayer and charity !”

* * * *

“ Now my Inez,” exclaimed the knight, “ we shall soon escape this burning sun, for yonder is the extensive pine-wood which the monks warned us we must pass ere reaching Villa Ruiva ; already do I detect the resinous odour with which these forests infect the air.” The veteran pointed as he spoke, to a belt of dark trees, which stretching wide before them, appeared to extend even to the far horizon.

"Shall we be long in the forest, my father?
Methinks it must be very gloomy."

"Perhaps it may be so; but its dense foliage
will at least screen us from the sun; and by
passing through it, we shall not fail to overtake
the mule train."

"I have heard, my father, that these woods
are oftentimes the resort of bandaleros."

"I made especial inquiries at the convent,
Inez, and was assured that there is scarcely a
gang of outlaws now in Portugal. The strict
enforcement of the wise laws of King Dennis
have driven them into the distracted kingdoms
of Leon and Castile."

Inez sighed, but whether through regret for
their late escort, or pain for her native country,
so torn with dissension and anarchy, it would be
hazardous to decide.

Shortly afterwards the lady inquired of her
father if the black knight had given him any
information respecting their route.

"I' faith, Inez," he answered, "I had scant

opportunity,—for a simple adieu on our entrance into the monastery was the only warning I received that we were to part company. On the morrow, as thou knowest, I inquired for our gallant guide, but was informed that he had approached the altar at day-break, and departed. I confess to thee, Inez, that I had been better satisfied had I known the name and abode of so noble a caballero ; as, perchance on some future day I might have returned, in some lowly sort, his invaluable services. As it is, however, nought is left but to remember him in our prayers, for there is little chance of our ever beholding him again,”

“Say not so, father ; should peril approach us, he will be beside us once more ! Behold !”—and slightly blushing as she drew the bugle from her girdle, the lady presented it to her sire. “It was the good knight’s parting gift,” she continued ; “ he requested that in case of any danger menacing us, Perez would wind three mots thereon ; and promised, on that condition, instant succour.”

Whilst she thus explained, Don Sebastian examined the rich gift carefully. It was of solid silver, richly chased and gilded. Various gems of great value enriched it, and the small mouth-piece was of purest amber. With the ready instinct of a votary of wood-sports, the knight raised it to his lips; but the hand of Inez checked him. "Not now, dearest father, surely not now;—to summon our champion when no danger threatens, were to trifle with his courtesy."

"Thou sayest well, and prudently,—yet I long to prove the compass and power of the noble horn,—though I doubt not it is capable of yielding a right merrie blast. Would thou hadst shown it to me ere we left the convent! It had been worth a stroll among the hills, to hear but the echo of its ringing note."

"That, in truth, was my reason for not giving it thee before, my father," replied Inez, with a playful smile; "I had not forgotten thy passion for wood-craft, and feared to awaken it in a country, to the laws and usages of which we are as yet strangers."

“ Well, well, my love, thou art ever wise and thoughtful. But what sayest thou to my delivering the horn to Perez, with the charge concerning it ?”

“ If such be thy pleasure, my father, it will doubtless be best.”

The bugle was accordingly confided to the squire, who promised implicit observance to the directions which were given with it ; and having satisfied his curiosity, and that of Sanchiza, by an exact scrutiny thereof, he resumed the long-drawn tale, concerning some outrageous bandalero, with which he had been (maugre the broiling sun) freezing the very veins of the listening bower-maiden.

Another half hour's ride brought them to the verge of the gloomy pine-wood, through which a slight mule-track led in a south-westerly direction. On entering it, the ambling trot at which they had hitherto proceeded, was exchanged for the tedious pace of their journey across the sierra. It was a striking contrast to the bright

and joyous sunshine, the impervious shade of those dark and interwoven branches; and though for some time an open space would now and then permit the sun's rays to reach the earth, such spots of light and verdure became gradually more rare, until as they neared the depths of the forest, an unbroken and sombre twilight reigned around. As it became impossible for two to ride abreast, Don Sebastian took advantage of one of those openings, to arrange his followers in the order most safe and convenient. After a brief consultation, Perez was directed to take the lead, and the knight followed him; then came Donna Inez closely attended by her maid, and the men-at-arms with the sumpter mules brought up the rear.

Few roads can be more dismal than those narrow paths through the majestic pine-woods which extend for leagues over the flat table-lands of the Peninsula. Their dark and rugged trunks rise, at small distances from each other, to a gigantic height, and not till within a few yards

of the crown, do the gnarled branches shoot out and intertwine, forming a roof never penetrated by the sun's most vigorous rays. And gloomy is the prospect; for in the perpetual twilight that reigns in these dense forests, the lengthened vistas disclose but the faintly traced mule-track stretching before and behind in one continuous line, between the stately pillars that support the dome of Nature's making. The coarse rank herbage, which has never seen the light of day, can boast no flower,—and the birds of heaven, either scared by the strong odours of the pine, or scorning its uninviting bowers, warble no tender strains within its shades.

The solemnity of the place soon oppressed the hearts of the travellers, and Sanchiza once or twice approached her mistress, as nearly as the road permitted, and whispered fears that owed no small portion of their intensity to the wondrous recital with which Perez had amused her in the morning. Inez, wrapped in her veil, scarcely heeded her remarks; for attributing the sadness

which began to cloud her spirits to the dismal nature of the road, she excluded it as much as possible from her view, and strove to busy herself with various engrossing thoughts. Perceiving that her lady paid little regard to her causeless terrors, Sanchiza at length forbore to interrupt her reveries. And they rode on for some time longer in silence. At length the trembling maid once more approached her lady, and whispered, with a look and accent of extreme alarm,—“For the love of Heaven, señora! remove thy veil.—Hark! I hear the sound of footsteps,—and lo! behind yon tree, a figure dark and motionless!—It is not fancy now, señora,—let us admonish Perez to be more heedful of his way.”

Donna Inez drew aside her veil, but heard no sound save the footsteps of their own cavalcade, and a mournful sighing among the trees, as if the breeze of evening were just beginning to steal among them. She was about to chide Sanchiza for having again disturbed her meditations, when,

following the directing finger of the maiden, the lady detected a dark object increasing the apparent bulk of one of the trees which stood just in advance of the party. Its appearance, however, was that of some inanimate thing, to which, in the dim twilight, almost any outline might have been ascribed ; but as she fixed her steadfast gaze thereon, a slight movement undeceived her. "Perez !" she exclaimed, "beware of an ambuscade !" But the words came too late,—ere they had left her lips, a bolt from a cross-bow had stretched the brave squire upon the grass.

The sword of Don Sebastian was in an instant unsheathed ; and greatly did he need the skill and experience of age to compensate for the lost vigour of youth. Four men, enveloped in short dark cloaks, and their faces shaded by widely spreading sombreros, assailed him, and nought but the fine temper of his armour preserved him from countless wounds. Remembering that his head was unhelmed, his chief attention was directed to its defence ; but all his efforts would

have been vain, had not Inez, perceiving that the troopers were defending the sumpter-mules from the attack of another party of marauders, commanded them to abandon their charge, and assist their lord. In order to enable them to do so, she compelled her palfrey to quit the narrow path; and as the affrighted creature plunged amongst the thickly planted pine-trees, an object caught her eye which caused the pulses of her heart to quicken with hope, and suffused her face with the blush of joy. It was the figure of the black knight, who alone, and evidently absorbed in deep thought, was slowly guiding his coal-black charger in the contrary direction to that she occupied. "Oh that he knew how fearfully we are beset!" she exclaimed,—“had Perez found means to sound the horn he had now been here!” She turned to her father; the troopers were at his side, and the robbers at bay;—but there was a spot of blood on his brow, and it was easy to perceive that the strength of the old knight was yielding beneath the vigorous attack of the ban-

daleros. A sudden blow striking the sword-arm of one of the troopers, disabled him ; and though he strove to defend himself with his left hand, Inez felt with a shudder of despair that the odds were greatly against her friends. She looked wistfully towards him of the black armour, who, apparently unconscious of the tumult, was slowly retiring into the farther recesses of the forest. The only chance of rescue was to summon his aid, and the only means of doing it, to approach him near enough to render her voice audible. An instant sufficed for this decision ; and to the utter amazement of Sanchiza, who, pale and trembling, gazed on the wild scene around as on a dreadful dream, the lady suddenly urged her jennet between the close trunks of the pines. Her speed however was little proportioned to her father's peril, or her own impatience. On, still, went the stranger knight, at a sauntering pace, with head bowed down, as if in profoundest thought, and all unconscious of the pressing need that required his aid. Yet more eagerly, as she

feared lest he might quicken his pace, did the lady urge her gallant palfrey, till distracted by the obstructions that impeded her progress, and rendered half frantic by the thought that her father might be already beyond all human aid, she suddenly called aloud, and in piercing accents implored for help. Her words were unheeded; and despairing of forcing her way further, she attempted the difficult task of returning, in order that, if unable to preserve her revered parent, she might at least perish beside him. At that moment the black knight chanced to turn his head, and with renewed hope, she waved her kerchief. The signal was observed, for the warrior beckoned her to draw nigher, at the same time making a circuit among the pines, which brought him opposite to her. Still he approached not, but patiently awaited her coming. Inez called, but without avail; her voice was lost in the tangled wilderness. Again therefore she urged on her unwilling steed, but the fiery animal, thwarted and fretted by the unaccustomed obstacles of the

pathless maze, had well nigh lost its wonted gentleness, and, but for the well-known voice of his mistress, had refused to proceed. At length, the distracted lady was sufficiently near to the knight, to note more particularly his horse and armour, and felt re-assured when, as if but just recognizing her, he started and hastened to meet her. She prayed him, as his steed came beside her, to fly to her father's succour; and he lowly inclining his head in reply, slipped a small silver whistle through the cruciform opening in his helmet, and its shrill notes rang like a shriek of despair through the mazes of the forest. "Let us fly to my father's aid, sir knight," exclaimed Donna Inez, trembling with agitation,—“already may the murderers have placed his life in extreme peril.” Another profound obeisance was the knight's only reply, as he pointed towards the spot she had just left; where she espied a party of men slowly advancing towards them. “O, wait not their arrival,” she cried, believing they were attendants whom he had summoned;

—“ I pray thee linger not here, thy single arm, señor, might even now avert a death-blow from the bare head of my father! Come, I implore—nay, by thy knightly vow *command thee*. Thou darest not refuse the prayer of a helpless lady !” And animating her steed with her voice, she essayed to lead the way to the place where she had left her sire. But the powerful arm of the black horseman arrested the forward step of the palfrey with so rude a check, that the animal, unaccustomed to such violence, reared and plunged with indignation. The knight retained his hold, however, and the spirited creature soon gave up the contention, and stood beside him, panting and trembling, but subdued. “ What wouldst thou, señor?” cried Inez, “darest thou prevent my succouring the author of my life ?”

“ I mean,” replied the knight, “that as yon bandeleros are returning from the encounter, our valiant aid is not needed ; therefore, fair damosel-errant, I shall have more leisure to bestow my utmost care on thee !”

The knell of death could not have struck with more appalling sound on the ear of Inez, than did the low, sneering tones of that harsh voice ; and, as transfixed with horror she gazed with dilated eyes and parted lips on the helmet whence those words proceeded, a loud laugh of triumph removed all doubt that it was Caelho who sat beside her. A heavy gasping sigh, that seemed almost to rend her oppressed heart, burst from her lips, a death-like faintness for an instant benumbed her faculties ; but recollecting that human aid was distant, and on her own energies must she rely (with Heaven's blessing) for her escape from her abhorred foe, she aroused her sinking spirit, and hastily committing herself to the disposal of providence, and the protection of her spiritual guardians, strove for calm,—and in part succeeded. Her first effort was to release her palfrey, but the knight held its rein with an iron grasp. For a moment she thought of gliding to the ground, not doubting that her slim and agile form would easily elude him among the

closely planted pines ; but the approach of the bandelero rendered such an attempt hopeless. Then the sudden thought struck coldly to her heart, whither should she fly ?—Had her father survived the murderous attack beneath which she had seen him failing ? Forgetting, then, her own peril in the distraction of that doubt, she by a desperate effort burst from the hold of Caelho, and urging her steed to meet the robbers, who were driving the sumpter-mules before them,—“ Tell me,” she cried,—“ Oh ! if ye be men, answer me,—doth my father live ?”

“ Aye, aye,” replied the foremost of the gang, —“ we have not harmed the old knight,—he is but bound to a tree, and the first arriero who passes in the morning, will find and free him.”

“ Merciful heaven !” she exclaimed, “ and must his venerable form be exposed all night to the chilling and unwholesome dews ?”

“ Not unless his daughter so wills it,” replied the count.

She turned to the villainous noble, who quietly

remained in the same spot, and as a last resource addressed him :—" Señor, Don Sebastian hath ever treated thee with the kindest courtesy,— nay, even now knows thee only as his favoured and honourable guest.—Oh ! forget that he is *my* sire, and save so virtuous and aged a noble from the peril of exposure in this horrid wilderness. By thy remembrance of the parent who guided thy early youth, I beseech thee rescue him !" The trembling words of the lady were checked by sobs, her voice had become hoarse and broken, and tears accompanied the prayer with which she besought mercy of him, who alas ! knew it not.

" Consent to the alliance I have before proposed, lady," replied Caelho, endeavouring to soften his rugged tones ; " thou well knowest it is my love for thee, that causes me to appear thus stern ;—only promise to be mine, and thy father is this instant free and unharmed."

" Seest thou not the baseness," cried Inez, as indignation aided her in recovering her firmness,

—"of thus extorting an unwilling consent to thy demand? Is it not contrary to all knightly honour,—to all generous and manly dealing, that a father's life should be the price of his daughter's vows? Oh, why wilt thou persist in requiring from me, what I cannot grant without perjury?—since thou well knowest that 'tis in vain to ask for my affections."

There was bitter irony in the knight's accents, as he replied,—“I am not unreasonable, fair Inez,—for thy love I can resignedly wait, content with the hope that since 'tis of such slow growth, it will be more fervent when at length obtained; but thy plighted vow must be at once assured me; and only on that condition do I release thy father."

Indignation swelled the heart of the hapless lady, but restraining her feelings, she remained some moments silent, revolving the difficulties which surrounded her, and hoping even yet to discover some escape from either dread alternative. But despair was on every side, and clasp-

ing her helpless hands, she raised her eyes to Heaven. Alas ! the frowning boughs of the gaunt pines shut from her sight the soft blue sky ! “ So,” she murmured, “ even so is my destiny ! horrid with dismay, and darkened over by utter hopelessness !—Yet no,” she added, and her voice gathered strength as she proceeded—“ though to behold the heavens is denied me in these gloomy shades, God is no less here than in the bright valleys wherein we blessed him at the dawn ! To Him !—and not to thee, false knight ! will I raise my voice, though the glorious footstool of His throne may not remind me of his universal love ! nor even to purchase a father’s life will I insult his sanctity by pronouncing a false vow. To Thee, then, O meek and perfect Saviour ! do I cry,—oh ! hear the crushed worm that implores thy protection ! And do thou strengthen my petition, Virgin Mother ! sweet refuge of the sorrowful ! Shelter me with thy powerful prayers, Mother of the Motherless !” Drawing her veil more closely

around her, the lady now in silence awaited her fate ;—her heart quailed indeed, but remembered the promises of Infinite Power and Benevolence. The wringing torture of despair had departed ;—she was still trembling and tearful, but resigned.

“By the Lord of Heaven !” exclaimed the impious knight,—and the loud fury of his voice made her start,—“thou bravest me, lady, as though thou wert *not* in my power ! Dost thou expect that St. Michael will descend, and bear thee hence, in order to thy more solemn celebration of his festival ? Knowest thou not”—and the scoffer approached his helmet almost close to her pallid face, and in low, hoarse tones continued,—“Knowest thou not that I have but to point with my finger, and my myrmidons would save thee all further solicitude respecting thy doting father ? Thinkest thou I forget, that to his weakness I owe it, that he did not command thy compliance with my wishes. Remember, señora, I consider thee *mine*, by *his* promise ; and

I swear, that no power shall prevent the fulfilment of that engagement. Thy wilfulness hath hitherto delayed it, but thy power to rebel is past; 'tis now for *me* to dictate conditions. Hadst thou so willed, thy compliance might have secured Don Sebastian's safety; but though thou declinest to concern thyself about him, thou shalt be no less securely mine! Come, then, young bride! we will kindly leave thy father to the wolves!"

Inez had listened as the count thundered forth his fierce threats, with a wild look of incredulity; but when he mentioned the ferocious animals, of whose existence in the pine-woods she had never before heard, a sudden attempt to spring from her palfrey indicated the frantic design of flying to her hapless parent. But forcibly prevented, she could only extend her hands towards the spot where she believed him bound, with a scream of utter woe that pierced the still recesses of the forest, like the last cry of mortal agony.

And what an echo did that cry awaken !— She heard it not, indeed, for unnerved and senseless, all her fortitude overpowered by the cruel idea conjured up to torture her ; she lay, a helpless, blighted thing, only preserved from sinking to the ground, by the fell grasp of her foe ! But the echo of that wail of despair !—long and loud, a blast arose,—and again,—and yet once more—rolled full and sullen through the woods. Caelho started, and fearing that some attempt at rescue was preluded by the stirring sound, hurried off with his prize.

Scarcely had he disappeared amid the depths of the forest, when a confused murmur of voices preceded the approach of several persons towards the spot where Donna Inez had endured so severe a trial. “ The cry came this way, and I am sure ’twas my lady’s voice,” exclaimed the foremost of the party, who was no other than the stout Perez.

“ My child ! my precious child !—oh for

the love of Christ's Blessed Mother, restore to me my child!" exclaimed Don Sebastian, who now aided in the pursuit,—now paused to tear his grey locks in an agony of despair,—as hope or fear predominated in his mind.

And there was one who spoke not a word, yet with breathless haste, and intensest scrutiny, traced the scarce observable path which the palfrey had taken through the long grass. On a sudden it was rendered confused, then undistinguishable; for a considerable space the herbage was trampled down, as if by numerous feet, and all further hint of the way taken by the fugitives appeared lost. The father became half frantic with impatience and fear, and his followers were at a stand; but not so the black knight, for it was indeed he on whom the hopes of the pursuers rested. He at once suggested that they should separate, and dividing among them the space surrounding the confused track, with strictest

caution examine the ground on every side. "Search heedfully," such was his parting charge—"but make good speed, for the shadows of the wood are deepening, and we must recover our track ere the light wanes."

They on this plan renewed their search, brushing down the long grass with their mailed feet, and bending over it, as if asking of the damp earth some tidings of their lost treasure. Every head was raised, however, when the black knight called to Perez:—"Knowest thou aught of this?"—extending towards him at the same time a small faded nosegay.

The anxious father took it from the warrior's hand, and after a moment's scrutiny, replied,—“It is the parting gift of the Benedictines—I observed that Inez wore it in her bosom !”

“Return it to me, I pray thee,” exclaimed the knight. “I have found the track,—follow me !”

Full hastily did he now pursue the discovered route, pointed out by the bended grass, at the very spot where the bunch of sweet marjoram lay; and which, having been first passed over by the plunderers with the mules, and afterwards by the steeds, formed a well-defined path. Cheered by hope, and burning with impatience, they passed rapidly on, and ere long perceived far before them the recreant knave Caelho, who, embarrassed by the lifeless form of his prize, with difficulty guided his own steed, and the palfrey on which he still supported the insensible Inez. Onward pressed the avengers, but in perfect silence; and as they neared the noble robber, they descried, a few paces before him, the slaves worthy of such a lord. One of these suddenly turning his head to address the count, perceived the pursuers,—and the party of Don Sebastian immediately rushed forward with a triumphant shout, above which the stunning note of the bugle rung like a pæan of exulting joy.

Rapidly did they now gain ground on the robbers. The Gitani perceiving that rescue was at hand, and thinking only of securing their booty, hastily unloaded the mules, distributed the *alforgas* amongst them, and fled in different directions. Caelho gnashed his teeth with fury, on beholding himself once more deserted by his associates. He soon perceived that his pursuers gained upon him, and the advantage of being on foot in that tangled wilderness being evident, he felt that to escape falling into their hands, he must abandon his prey.

Once he half drew his dagger, as he looked from the pursuers to the drooping form that, pallid as monumental marble, hung helplessly on his arm ; but some interposing thought averted the fiendish design, and relaxing his grasp, she sunk to the ground. The palfrey instantly stopped, and remained motionless beside his mistress, and the villain urged his less cumbered steed with accelerated speed across the forest.

Not long did that fairest form rest on the long

dank grass ;—with a cry of horror, and a bound which left the rest of his party far behind, one rushed to the spot and raised her drooping head, and bent with trembling fear over her hueless countenance. Then dashing his gauntlet to the ground, and taking her pulseless hand in his—
“There is no wound !” he murmured ; “ Ah no !—unless his ruthless words have power to slay, he could not, villain though he be, destroy such excelling sweetness !”

Don Sebastian, followed by Perez and Gaspar, now approached, and the former throwing himself on his knees, exclaimed—“ ’Tis too late ! ’tis all too late ! O miserable old man, thy child is slain !”

“ Be composed,” whispered the young warrior ; “ ’tis but a swoon. Speak to her, thy voice will aid her reviving ; behold, she sighs,—and now—those heavenly eyes ! Speak to her, but be sure thy words are calm !”

There was a profound sadness in the voice of the speaker, but the father, re-assured by

perceiving in Inez signs of returning life, heeded it not. He took her disengaged hand, (for one the young knight still unconsciously retained), and murmured words of hope, and safety, and fondest love. As consciousness returned, Inez fixed her eyes on him, and faintly murmured—"Thou art safe, my father—methought the wolves!—but no, 'twas a horrid dream! Bless me, oh my father!"

"The choicest blessings of Heaven be ever with thee, thou sole treasure of an old man's declining days! I am indeed safe, and thou also, thanks to this noble knight!"

Inez thus directed to him whose arm sustained her, no sooner beheld his dark helmet, than springing from him, she clung to Don Sebastian, exclaiming,—“ Oh, save me, my father! save me!”

The two knights started to their feet, and regarded each other with dismay. The stranger uttered not a word, though Gaspar, hurrying to his side, whispered a few rapid words in low

and agitated tones ; he stood as if perplexed with wonder. But Don Sebastian, after a moment's pause, calmly said,—“ Forgive her, O generous knight ; didst thou not perceive how similar to thine, was the armour of the caitiff who would have torn her from me ? And do thou, my Inez, be composed ; for behold, the gallant knight is here, who protected thee in the Sierra de Gata. This is he,—summoned by the bugle, which the stunned Perez, on his recovery, wound as thou badest him !”

A slight blush brightened the faded cheek of Inez, as timidly turning to the young knight, she murmured—“ Forgive me, señor, my mind's bewilderment ;—and I pray thee, let me hear thy voice. Methinks I shall then feel assured that he whom I dread, is not in that dark armour.”

“ Fairest lady,” he replied, “ I must surely be degraded in thine eyes, if even similar armour can confound me with that recreant knave, whom our mere shouts so lately compelled to fly !”

The eyes of the fair girl sparkled with delight, and her countenance was suffused with a glow of surprise and bashful joy, as extending her hand to him, she exclaimed,—“O well do I recognise the voice of my preserver!”

CHAPTER IX.

" O scathful harm, condition of poverty,
 With thirst, with cold, with hunger, so confounded,
 To asken help thee shameth in thine herte,
 If thou non ask, so sore art thou ywounded,
 That veray nede unwrappeth al thy wound hid,
 Maugre thin hed thou must for indigence,
 Or stele or begge, or borwe thy dispense,

* * * * *

Herken what is the sentence of the wise,
 Bet is to dien than have indigence,
 Thy selve neighebour wol thee despise;
 If thou be poure farewel thy reverence,
 Yet of the wise man take this sentence,
 Alle the dayes of poure men ben wicke;
 Beware therefore or thou come to that pricke."

Chaucer.

AND now adieu to the impervious forests, the
 open glades, and rugged wildernesses ; for we ap-
 proach the crowded dwellings where the busy and
 the proud, the wealthy and the enterprising, have
 collected the best gifts that man can wring from

ature, and all the conveniences and embellishments furnished by the ingenious or elegant arts.

But let us not exult at the change ; for though from the contemplation of the restless metropolis an observer may, perhaps, best form an opinion respecting the prosperity, the energies, the resources of a people, yet he who estimates the character and virtues of a nation, by the tone of manners, or habitual customs of its capital, inflicts on its children a manifest injustice. There rivalry, and competition, and the conflicting interests of the sordid lovers of wealth, meet and contend, rendering the heart callous and selfish ; there the cunning and the profligate spread their most specious wiles to entrap incautious youth ; there overgrown wealth defies the wholesome checks of religion and policy ; and the meaner and more grovelling passions unobserved secure their golden harvest.

There, too, the most ceaseless struggle goes on between Christianity and a sinning world ; the latter ever luring from the Church's bosom some

weak disciple,—the former perpetually snatching from destruction such as, pausing in the downward path, raise a supplicating eye towards her.

And on closely marking this perpetual warfare, we shall find that some one prevailing danger ever supersedes in the vastness of its power, all other perils. In one age or country it will be a cold negligence that prevails, fearfully disfiguring the great body of Christians ; though,—like the dust encrusting some beautiful statue, and giving rise to doubts as to its genuineness, only requiring some energetic hand to restore its pristine purity. Sometimes voluptuousness, that fatal miasm, born of prolonged prosperity ! infects even the air of the sanctuary, and generates the mental fevers whence spring novelties, and heresies, and schisms :—and, fellest of all ! at another period we shrink before the broad and hideous front of Infidelity, as it stalks over some hapless land, crushing with its iron heel the very hearts of Faith's truest children, and plunging a whole people in reckless immorality. Yet never will

be wanting, even in the strongest holds of the enemy, abundant evidence, in the lives of thousands, that though always warring with the world, religion cannot sink in the struggle.

But the events we are now recording, introduce us to a country and an age, favoured in the annals of the world ;—not, alas ! by being free from crime, such triumph never having been won since the primal fall,—but because peace and religion then strove hand in hand to soften and repair the evils inseparable from humanity, and the influence of one of the best sovereigns who ever occupied a throne, Dionysius “the Patriotic,” “the father of Portugal !” (though through the turbulent and wilful character of his successor lost to the court) still showered its blessings on the people. Yet even where justice so far triumphs, that no evil may be openly perpetrated, the warfare rageth still ; for hearts enslaved to their native corruption, are ever striving to compass by cunning, what they dare not hope to attain by violence. Prepared therefore to find

much of evil, even where law and order most prevail, we approach the capital.

The lower streets of Lisbon were yet enveloped in the grey mists that mark the windings of the Tagus, and the loftier buildings, which were enabled by their commanding site to peep above the heavy vapours, flashed back from many a gilded cross and storied casement the beams of the rising sun. The busy hum of active thousands was beginning to ascend from the populous city, and the smoke from countless fires mounted in distinct unswerving columns into the buoyant air. The mist gradually rolled away,—the high embattled walls, which, following the variations of the ground, completely encircled the city, became distinctly visible; and at every point where the suburban roads branched off, ponderous gates, flanked by towers, and strongly fortified, were guarded by slowly pacing sentinels. Along those winding and rugged roads might be seen various groups approaching the city, some few being peasants, clad in their gay holiday costume,

on their way to pay a rare visit of curiosity to the capital, or weary wayfarers beholding with revived hearts the termination of a prolonged journey; but the greater number bore wares and provisions, which the provinces contributed daily, to supply the unceasing wants of the citizens. Here patient oxen slowly drew the heavily laden wagon of most primitive construction, and its massive wheels composed of a single piece of wood, emitted at every revolution a harsh sound, which was supposed by the simple driver to stimulate the horned slaves. There the sturdy arriero ran beside his macho, and the whole train, drooping and dust-covered, bore evidence that their journey had been long and wearisome. Solitary mules also hurried on before their loquacious drivers, bearing large panniers filled with luscious fruits and freshly gathered vegetables, on which the evening dews yet rested. And the cheerful Gallego, active, erect, and gracefully shouldering his gaily-coloured barrel, bestowed a bright glance, or kindly greeting on

all he met ; and hastened with the free step of a mountaineer to refresh the Lisboans with pure water drawn from the coldest spring.

To all, the guarded gates were opened with little precaution ; and as the traffickers carried their wares into the city, each by some well-known and oft-repeated cry admonished his customers of his arrival. Above them all, however, rose the call of the water-carrier, clear and shrill : “ Who wants water !—Pure water, sparkling and clear, and colder than snow ! ” Soon were they surrounded by the eager housewives, the many-tinted barrels emptied, and the indefatigable Gallicians again hastening towards the hills north of the city. Soon arose above the busy hum of the multitude, the inviting sound of bells, which from tower and spire called the faithful from the indiscriminate crowd, to devote to holiest purposes the beginning of the new day. And thousands obeyed the call ; not only they who led a life of comparative leisure, the merchant, the noble, the trim and veiled dame, attended by

sage duenna, and preceded by primer-bearing page ; but labourers on the way to their daily toil passed not by the open porch ; citizens grudged not the short half hour taken from their daily avocations ;—and the train of mules loitering near some favourite church, intimated that even the arriero was performing his morning orison. One half hour of comparative silence passed, and then the active labours of the day commenced. The crowded market-place, the quay, the mart, the various Praças, or public squares, the narrow streets, rendered still more confined by the display of wares beneath the overhanging gables, formed a confused scene of bustle and excitement. But it was on the margin of the river, and in the streets and squares adjacent to it, that the extreme of activity prevailed ; for the smooth waves of the Tagus formed the chief means of communication between the various parts of the city ; the steep streets of which were ill calculated for traffic or the display of horsemanship.

In a few hours after dawn, however, the markets were usually deserted; for the prudent housewives were careful to secure their purchases, ere a ray of the ascending sun glanced over them; and the peasants by whom they were provided, had left the city, and in most cases regained their homes, ere the oppressive heats of noon were parching the rugged roads.

Whilst yet the morning bustle of the southern metropolis was at its height, a man, wrapped in a capote, or wide cloak, similar in form and texture to such as were to be seen in every part of the city, and wearing a cap unadorned by plume or jewel, slowly traversed a street, extending along the very brow of the abrupt hill, on which the chief part of Lisbon was then seated. His brows were sternly bent, his arms folded in his cloak, and his eyes immovably fixed on the ground. On arriving at an angle, where a steep thoroughfare crossing the one in which he walked, led into a wide Praça, he paused; and turning, addressed a few words to a man who

followed him, holding the steel bridle of a powerful grey war-horse, respecting its more heedful guidance down the descent they were approaching. The latter accordingly withdrew the eager gaze with which he had been regarding the apparently novel scene around him, and with scrupulous care watched the broad feet of the destrier, as he cautiously selected the least slippery footing on the uneven ground.

And not unworthy of the attention of the stranger was the scene that surrounded him, although some all-absorbing care, or deeply revolved design, kept his eyes fixed on the earth. The steep street they were descending continued on the opposite side of a wide *Praça*, (now thronged with men and animals) even to the river side; overlooking, at its upper extremity, the crowded buildings of the lower portion of the city, and commanding a magnificent view of the Tagus, whereon lateen-sailed boats, and stately barges, and variously formed vessels from every maritime nation, were indiscriminately mingled.

Beyond the glowing river appeared the serrated line of gentle hills, rising on its southern banks; the little town of Arrabida, founded by the English crusaders who aided Alphonso the First to rescue Portugal from the Moors; the rich and extensive meadows, which were the reward of their bravery; and in the extreme distance, the elevated and snow-clad range of the Serra da Arrabida.

No wonder, if, unmindful of such a scene, the moody stranger remarked not one, who had with extreme caution, for some time dodged his steps. Now passing him with a careless air, he paused at a spot where some humble dealer exposed his wares, and while apparently inspecting the articles offered for sale, regarded the object of his scrutiny with a keen, furtive glance; and then, with such cunning precaution as to appear intent on anything in earth or sky rather than the one being who absorbed his entire thoughts, he continued patiently to follow his footsteps.

The individual last introduced to the reader,

was clad in the simple dress of a farmer of one of the northern provinces ; a wide and shapeless cloak flung around him, hung in graceful folds over his left shoulder, but so arranged, that, leaving the right arm and left leg uncovered, it neither obstructed his pace, nor interfered with the ready use (in case of need) of a small and slender weapon, the handle of which protruded from his girdle. His countenance was remarkable, and did not lack a certain low kind of intelligence ; his eyes were black and sparkling, his dark hair cropped unusually short, and his beard pointed ; but as he looked around from under his brows, he appeared sadly deficient in the free and open bearing of the Lusitanian peasant.

On went the close observer, and the unconscious objects of his scrutiny, until entering the Praça, the latter approached the spot where numerous steeds of various sizes, races, and capabilities, were awaiting the decision of a purchaser. " Alas !" exclaimed the superior, pat-

ting, with caressing hand, the arched neck of the gallant steed ; “ Alas, poor Guidal ! thou art come to this at last ! ”

“ Well, señor Perez,” replied the attendant, “ he was ever willing to do his master’s bidding, and could he but speak now, be sure he would say,—‘ If I can serve my master no otherwise, e’en sell me, since his need requires it ! ’ ”

Perez only answered with a sigh, and he who had so attentively watched their footsteps, having insinuated himself close behind them whilst they held this brief conversation, suddenly busied himself among the horses at a distant part of the Praça. He lifted the foot of one animal, examined the jaws of another, stroked the sinewy leg of a third ; but an attentive eye might have remarked, that the grey stallion alone occupied his thoughts. Gradually he approached him nearly, and at length, patting his silken coat with his sunburnt hand, made the customary inquiries. After conversing for some time with the man who had charge of Guidal, he, seeing a

prospect of a purchaser, made the signal to Perez, who had retired beneath the porch of an adjacent building, whence he viewed with a stern and melancholy gaze the symmetrical form of the graceful creature, with which (in his opinion at least) no animal in the market was even remotely comparable. "Ha," exclaimed the farmer, as Perez approached, "thou art the owner, I suppose?"

"Not so,—but empowered to sell him."

"The same thing," replied the other: "I like the beast, and am satisfied of his breed and training; but the price thy varlet names is of the highest."

"It is far below his value."

"He looks mettlesome."

"He has the fiery blood of Andalusia in his veins, señor!—what would ye?—the gentlest tercel could not be more intelligent and tractable."

"The price named includes his housings and armour?"

"Yes."

“ Well, I love a good steed, and will e'en indulge myself for once. Let us to yon estaglem, and conclude our bargain.”

Perez gave no other reply than a gesture of assent ; but drawing his cap over his eyes, and dismissing the attendant, he took the bridle of the horse, and followed the purchaser.

Crossing the Praça, they entered a narrow street, in which stood a small estaglem or inn, usually frequented by those who attended the adjacent market. Here, having procured a bota, or leathern bottle of weak wine, they seated themselves on a shaded bench which was fixed beside the door ; and as Perez, slipping the bridle of Guidal over his arm, regarded him with regretful eyes, his new master opened a purse of goat-skin, and drew from it a multitude of coins various in form and value. The difficult task of computing the large sum agreed upon, with such discordant materials, soon bewildered him ; so that Perez, perceiving his embarrassment, offered his assistance. The

other gladly accepted it, observing,—“ My help-mate always counts the money, for my skill in such matters goes not far. Oh, don't be over-scrupulous,” he added, with a sly smile, as Perez counted and computed the coins, of which almost every two varied in value. “Pray don't be so very particular ; I can trust thee, señor,”—and his smile grew broader, as he added,—“Why man ! I am not afraid that thou wouldst take a single reis more than thy due, even if I were to place all I have in thy hands !—never fear but I can trust thy honest face !” He concluded with a giggling laugh ; which, however, he endeavoured to suppress, and in the effort his face underwent sundry wry and uncouth contortions ; till at length, giving way to an emotion that appeared uncontrollable, he burst into a fit of laughter, so violent and prolonged, as to force the tears down his sunburnt cheeks. Perez was at first astonished, then half displeased at the stranger's mirth, which jarred discordantly on his saddened feelings ; but at length his prolonged, and evi-

dently heartfelt gaiety became infectious. The gravity of the Spaniard succumbed to its influence, in spite of the melancholy which weighed on his spirits, and at first smiling at the grimaces of his companion, (who was now almost convulsed by his rude mirth) and then participating in it, it was not till he had indulged in a hearty laugh that he found voice to ask what had diverted him so exceedingly. "That's right," replied the other, slapping his back with jocund familiarity,—“laugh, man, laugh!—never be cast down;—see how I laugh, though about to part with so many golden pieces;—ha! ha! ha! —Care never mended cracked tinaja!*—oh! oh! oh! Let those laugh that lose, and the winner is sure to laugh;—ha! ha! ha!” And again he laughed convulsively, rolling on the bench, and holding his sides, and turning towards Perez his mischievous eyes, whence the tears flowed abundantly, with such a crafty leer, that had not the latter held the open purse,

* Jar.

which made him appear the safer of the two, a spectator might have supposed that merry, roguish looking farmer, some cunning sharper laughing at his dupe.

Not so, however, the honest Perez. He beheld without a suspicious thought the strange being, the sight of whose genuine mirth would have sufficed to set an audience in a roar; and though his heart was heavy, yet he could not resist the impulse, nor refrain from joining in the merriment; but with that unwilling laughter which is far more akin to tears than to the joyous outbreak of an unbroken spirit. At length, wiping his eyes, the peasant said,—“ I pray thee make an end of thy counting, señor, and let me laugh at my leisure.”

Perez accordingly proceeded; but when he occasionally paused to satisfy his conscientious scruples respecting some lugubrious and aged coin, the other's mirth was renewed, and he at length exclaimed,—“ Go on! prythee, or we shall have to walk the streets beneath the burning sun

of noon. Believe me, I am not so nice, señor, nor so out of conceit of my bargain as to haggle about a few testoenes.*"

"But I would have thee remember," replied Perez proudly, "that a Castilian scorns to accept the value of a date-stone more than his due!"

"Well, well," answered the merry countryman, "take what thou requirest and give me the horse and my pouch ;—I must be gone."

Perez placed the purchase-money in his own empty purse, returned to its owner the one (still well stored) from which he had counted it ; and with a regretful countenance delivered Guidal to his new owner. "Treat him kindly, for he's a gallant steed, and has been highly prized," he murmured ; then hastily, as if not daring to take another look at the noble animal, hurried into the crowded Praça. Guidal turned his head as he departed ; and regarding his retreating form with his broad intelligent eye, essayed with a

* About sixpence, and of equal value to 100 reis.

low whinny to recall him,—but in vain ; his old friend was gone ; and even the dark, restless eye of his master became shaded with a touch of feeling.

It was but for a moment, however ; for as Perez disappeared, he once more burst into a frantic laugh. “ O rare ! O wonderful ! ” he exclaimed, between the bursts of his boisterous merriment,—“ O scrupulous Perez ! O honest Perez ! bless thy Castilian pride ! ha ! ha ! ha ! —Who could choose but laugh to see thee so carefully accepting thine own reis, thine own testoons, thine own moidores,—to behold thee so fearful of receiving too many of the coins that came from thine own alforgas ! O it is a tale shall make the walls of our cavern ring for many a day to come!—ha ! ha ! ha ! ” Then, as if suddenly recollecting himself, he hastily wiped the tears from his swarthy face, in a hurried manner led Guidal to the stable of the estaglem, and running into the Praça, saw Perez leisurely mounting the upper part of the steep Rua San Joao.

With the same caution that had before attended his motions, he once more followed the unsuspecting squire, nor gave up the pursuit until he had watched him to a house situated in one of the loftiest districts of the city. Having scanned the building with one of his rapid glances, he turned away with a gratified air, and his step was brisk and elastic as he returned to the estaglem where he had left Guidal.

No longer, however, do we follow his footsteps, but rather attend the faithful Perez, who having bounded up a narrow stair, was now threading a very labyrinth of corridors and winding galleries. At a closed door he paused, and gently knocked; then opening it, and pushing aside a curtain of silk that fell before it on the inner side, he stood in a low room of wide dimensions. It was lined with hangings that had once glowed with quaint embroidery, though now tintless, and in some parts slightly worn; and an embayed window traversed by massive stone mullions, and in its upper compartments ornamented with stained

glass, occupied nearly the whole of the farther end. Its open casement revealed a small balcony beyond, covered with luxuriant flowers, that diffused their delicate odours through the apartment. Curtains of similar hue and texture to the drapery that fell over the door, were suspended on each side of the window, in such a manner as to be capable of excluding the glare of summer noon, or the blasts of winter. They were now only partly drawn, so as to temper the brightness of the gairish day.

Near the shaded window, and beside a massive table, sat the Lady Inez and her father. The latter reclined listlessly in a cumbrous arm-chair, covered with faded tapestry; his face was pale, his features sharpened, and the fire in his dark eye dimmed. A bandage was wrapped round his forehead, and the long tunic which he wore, hung loosely upon him, as though the athletic form which it once fitted had become attenuated by sickness or age. His daughter sat beside him, attired in the closely fitting boddice, and

long graceful robes of the period. Her dark hair was gathered into a few simple braids, that revealed the full contour of her ample brow; all save a few drooping curls that clustered round her throat, and heightened by the contrast its dazzling whiteness. No gem glittered among her silken tresses,—meekness, and modesty, and unfailing sweetness, were her sole adornments. One fair hand, the matchless symmetry of which had been for courtly minstrel a fitting theme, clasped a small manuscript, from which she had been reading to her father; and the other hung over the side of his chair, as, with an attitude of exceeding tenderness, she bent towards him. As Perez entered, she raised her eyes from the illuminated page, and the rough soldier paused at the threshold, and seemed to think, that never was formed of earthly mould, a creature of more exceeding loveliness.

As Perez advanced, no word was uttered; he approached the aged knight, and opening his pouch, deposited on the table the sum of money

he had received for the charger. "Alas ! poor Guidal !—my tried and gallant steed !—so thou art now a stranger's slave !" Inez pressed her father's thin hand to her lips. "Ah my beloved child," said he in reply to her mute caress, "I will not repine ;—whilst *thou* remainest to me, I have lost nothing !—Well, Perez, hast thou chosen a good master for my favourite ? Thou knowest I would willingly have abated somewhat in the price (although our wants are pressing) to have secured him good usage."

"If I may judge by his merry humour, señor, better master need no steed have,—but, in truth, he was not over-cautious of his monies."

The knight turned over the small heap of coins with an abstracted air, and Inez taking some of them in her hand, observed,—“ They are unlike those we received for the mules and palfrey, which mostly bore the name and profile of the good King Dennis.”

Her father made no reply, being, in fact, wrapped in anxious and painful thought, and she

continued to examine one after another the various and much defaced coins. "What thinkest thou, Perez?" she continued, extending towards him one of the more perfect pieces of money.

"Alas! lady, I have never been much accustomed to such roving friends,—but methinks it must be Spanish money, or I had not counted it so readily."

"Wert thou not surprised at its resemblance to our Castilian currency?"

"No, señora, for as the speech of the Lisboans so nearly resembles ours, why may not their coins also? But the man had the appearance of those northern provincials whom we so frequently meet about the city; perhaps he hath dealings in Galicia;—I have heard that only a narrow stream divides Spanish Tuy from Portuguese Valença."

"It matters little," observed Don Sebastian, "whence they come,—I doubt not they will pass full quickly:—ah me! I only wish I possessed a few more of them."

Perez withdrew, and Inez approaching yet closer to her father, entwined her arm in his, but ventured not to raise her eyes to his face, for she knew that gloomy thoughts perplexed his mind. The silence, after being for some time prolonged, was at length broken by the knight, who observed in a feeble and dispirited tone,—“The price of the palfrey and the mules disappeared in a vain endeavour to recover our stolen alforgas, in which were bestowed all the valuables our hasty flight permitted us to secure.—’Twas a mere fragment of the princely fortune, which thou, my beloved child, wert born to inherit ; but sufficient to provide against the few wants of my old age, and reserve thee something of a dower. But now !—aid us, blest protectress of the desolate ! for we shall soon be in more need than thou wert in thy Egyptian pilgrimage !”

The knight pressed his hand to his brow, and after a moment's pause, proceeded :—“Alas, my Inez ! at least half of this sum is due to the good widow under whose roof we dwell ; a moiety of

what remains must be paid to the rough Lusian who sheltered Guidal;—'twas his importunity overcame my reluctance to part with my gallant grey. The few jewels that we wore, were expended during my sickness at Villa de Ruiva;—behold then, all my worldly wealth!”

Whilst he spoke, the knight had separated the heap of money into two portions, one of which he again divided, and to the smaller of these pointed as he concluded.

Inez extended her hand towards the table, and dropped from her taper finger a small ring, the last of her jewels, on the little sum her father still called his; then looking in his anxious face with a smile, which plainly told him, that her youthful and sanguine spirit did not quail before the threat of poverty, exclaimed: “Accept my first offering to thy slender means, my father; my next shall be in the less substantial form of advice, if I may so far presume?”

“Speak, my child; there is ever a gentle wisdom in thy words; and even if thou shouldst

fail to suggest aught available to remedy our
luckless loss, the sweet music of thy voice
will soothe and calm my disturbed mind.”

CHAPTER X.

"Gently hast thou told
Thy message, that might else in telling wound,
And in performing, end us."

HAVING obtained her father's permission to offer him counsel, Donna Inez, with timid caution, and experiencing the while a pang not unlike that with which a feeling surgeon applies the knife to the diseased limb of a weakly nerved patient; proceeded to propose the only line of conduct which remained for them to adopt. "Since to approach the throne with the dignity becoming thy rank is impossible, my dearest father, and the Prior de san José, to whom was addressed the letter given to thee by the only friend"—and her voice faltered—"whom we have found in Portugal, is absent in England,

it seemeth to me that we must lessen our expenses, and patiently await his return, by whose aid we may yet obtain redress for our plundered goods. 'Tis indeed, a loss too great to be submitted to, until every effort to recover it hath proved unavailing ; but our suspense cannot continue more than a few months."

"Ha !" exclaimed the knight, impatiently ; "and during that time we must be content to live on one meal a day, like clowns in a bad harvest !—Is that thy meaning ?"

"No, indeed, my father ; I have no fear that want will ever approach so nearly to thee ;" and the young girl tenderly kissed the hand she still retained in hers.

"Soul of my body ! but it is like enough ;—am I not well nigh helpless ? The slow fever that followed this vile wound," he said, placing his hand on his temple, "hath completely despoiled me of my strength. But for it, I might have won many a splendid ransom in the tourney ; as it is, I doubt if I could stand under the weight

of my armour, and could not hope to wield my heavy sword."

"I can suggest a far better mode of lessening thy needs."

"Canst thou, indeed? let me hear it, then, in heaven's name!"

"Appoint me thy secretary."

"Alas! that the task should be so easy!—but take it an' thou wilt;—behold the whole of thy charge." And Don Sebastian pointed towards the small sum on which the ring of Inez rested.

"Nay, withhold not from me any portion of thy confidence,—e'en believe me a right trusty clerk."

"As thou wilt—as thou wilt,—but with my large possessions, thou must undertake also the claims upon them."

Inez smiled assent, and the old knight swept the whole amount that Perez had obtained for Guidal into her hands. With deliberate care she counted out the various sums he owed, and finding the surplus something more than had

appeared on his careless division of the puzzling coins, she joyously exclaimed,—“ Behold a good commencement of my new duties !—What says my father now to his secretary ?”

The hopeful cheerfulness of her manner inspired the luckless knight with brighter thoughts, and he smiled as he replied :—“ I will tell thee when I can pronounce on the first act of thy office.”

Inez turned over with a thoughtful air the still insignificant sum that remained, and her voice was serious, though calm, as she answered :—“ Since 'tis plain indeed that we are poor—very poor,—let us not attempt to conceal from ourselves,—nor from others if need be,—our hapless case. For why should we be ashamed of our poverty ? It has not been occasioned by extravagance or folly ; but by one of those mischances permitted by Divine Providence for some wise end. It is no crime, nor is it accounted such, which were scarcely less fearful to one like thee. On the contrary, poverty, if holy, (and why

may not ours be so?) is the cherisher of the most heroic virtues. Instead of repining at it, we will perpetually call to mind, who voluntarily became poorest of the poor, for the love of us,—we will remember the thousands who have in every age cheerfully embraced this state, in preference to the wealth and honours to which they were born; and thus, instead of chafing our souls with vain regrets, we shall be only intent on making the best use of our time of trial.”

She paused, and anxiously regarded her father's countenance, who listened to her calmly. Encouraged by his mild attention, she resumed her painful theme. “Since, then, our means are so slender, our expenses must surely accord with them; and as the sum needed to sustain six persons for one fortnight, would suffice for two during thrice that period—” she paused, for the agitation of her father's countenance forbade her to proceed.

“I see it all!” he faintly murmured. “Alas! I had augured better counsel from thy cheerful

looks, my child ! And must I then cast off, in a foreign land, the few faithful hearts that yet cling to my desperate fortunes ?”

“ Oh, my father—mistake me not ; had we aught for ourselves, we might welcome them to a share thereof ; but have we not been despoiled of our all ? Besides, my father, thy intentions are altogether frustrated. What need have we of their services, who possess neither steed nor mansion ? and can their idleness avail us aught ? No, surely, unless it be to render us accountable for the sins of which it may be the occasion. We may not, indeed, with justice, dismiss our countrymen without regard to their well-doing, but they may address them to seek the protection of some knight or noble, to whom such true hearts and brave cannot fail to be most welcome. Thus much had I to say respecting our people, but I have yet another proposal, my father.”

“ What need of consultation ?” interrupted Don Sebastian, with a querulousness foreign to the natural tenor of his mind, which sickness,

and misfortune, and the chilling threats of poverty had combined to weaken.—“Do as thou thinkest best, my child. As for me, my mind is bewildered, and only capable of the withering thought, that I am helpless and a beggar in a strange land !”

Donna Inez forbore to urge him farther, but abandoning the painful theme, strove by cheering converse, by smiles and caresses, to beguile him of his despondency.

But her youth and buoyant spirit, not yet deprived of that inestimable privilege peculiar to youth, the facility of adapting itself to circumstances, could not, with all its tenderness and sympathy, appreciate the extent of her father's trial. The habits of half a century had strengthened all his prejudices, and rendered them a portion of his being ; and he found it impossible to regard with any other feelings than such as spring from disgust and disappointment, the country he had entered under evil auspices. The sapling may be easily influenced, its boughs trained erect, or bent to the earth ; nay, even if rooted from its birth-

place, it will readily fix itself in a foreign soil ; but not so the tree whose wide-spread branches have endured many a winter's storms, and been re-clothed by many succeeding springs. It may be shivered by the lightning, despoiled by the blast, or torn from its resting place, but no effort can bend its rugged nature, or make its knotty roots to thrive in a new soil.

Anxious to harass him no more with the mortifying subject, Donna Inez determined to avail herself at once of her father's permission ; and whilst he took his siesta, summoned her few attendants. There is no evil but when properly grappled with, loses half its terrors ; and Inez found her dreaded task comparatively easy ; for well aware of the robbery, though little suspecting how closely it pressed upon their lord, the troopers had anticipated her announcement by consultations among themselves. Already wearied of a life of inaction, and conscious that they were but useless incumbrances on their lord, they had concerted a plan for getting enrolled among the royal guards, and were glad of an opportunity of

imparting it to Donna Inez ; for, relying on the athletic hardihood of their forms, and their perfect training, they doubted not of success. But though a similar dismissal of Perez and Sanchiza formed part of her plan, the lady shrunk from attempting it, and preferred to defer it until she should be able to obtain some advice from the good matron in whose house they had obtained temporary shelter ; and in whom Inez had, from the first moment of beholding her placid and sorrowful countenance, calculated on finding a safe counsellor.

Having dismissed the men, therefore, she seated herself at an embroidery frame which stood near the window ; but as she uncovered the work, with the intention of applying herself to it, Sanchiza exclaimed,—“Thou art unmindful of the hour, señora,—the sun is nearly at the highest !”

“I feel no need of noontide rest,” replied Donna Inez, “the year is declining rapidly, and each day the sun’s power diminishes. Moreover, I am anxious to complete my orphrey.”

“But to broder at mid-day, promises not well

for the delicate hues thou hast selected so heedfully."

"Seest thou not that I am but introducing the foundations to the raised parts? these, though of far inferior texture, are not less essential to the beauty of the whole, than those portions that meet the eye. Behold! are these hues dimmed?" As she spoke, the fair embroidress removed a piece of parchment which covered a finished portion of her work.

"Beautiful!" exclaimed the bower-maiden;—"surely the vestments of which Donna Maria de Zibrieria speaks with such exultation cannot surpass this!"

"And of what doth she speak so rapturously?" asked Inez, resuming her occupation.

"Of a splendid set of dalmatics, with two copes to match them, which have lately been presented to the cathedral by the Infant. They have but lately arrived from England, and are to be used for the first time on the feast of St. Michael and the Holy Angels. Ah, lady, thou

shudderest !—but surely not with cold ?”

“ No, no, Sanchiza; suspect me not of aguish qualms; believe me, ’twas but a passing thought that chilled my veins. But how canst thou believe that thy mention of the glorious archangel, could recall my terrors in the wood of pines ?—yet so it was.”

“ Ah! well might such thoughts make thee shudder, dearest lady. Never can I forget,—no, though my life were prolonged like that of blessed St. John, never will my memory cease to recall the horrors of that fearful eve. Ah! Donna Inez, canst thou wonder at the reluctance with which the troopers leave their lord, when each recalls the love and tenderness with which his noble daughter tended their wounds. But, that fearful forest! Good angels shield us from ever beholding its like again! And yet, *señora*,”—and the voice of the maiden fell to a confidential whisper,—“ I must say the forest hath its advantages, for we had only to command a good blast of a certain bugle, and behold a

champion appeared, before whom every danger fled like the fiends before the cross. Whilst, in this crowded city, even if the same true heart be here, we are far more deprived of his succour than when in the pathless wilderness."

"He was but the instrument of an all-pervading Providence," murmured Inez "beyond whose boundless love no extreme of danger can place us."

"Well, I only wish the black knight knew as much of my lord's trouble, as I can guess,—I doubt not he would devise some means of aiding him."

"I know not why, (save from the fewness of our friends) thou shouldst calculate so confidently on a stranger whose generous charity has already loaded us with a debt too great to pay!"

"A debt, señora? Have I not heard thee say, that every knight is sworn to succour the helpless, especially ladies, widows, and orphans? The knight, then, hath but acted in fulfilment of his vow, and the honour he hath won is his priceless guerdon!"

“ Well dost thou repeat words uttered by myself in days gone by,” sighed Inez. “ A Christian knight who fulfils all the duties of his vocation, is indeed a living illustration of the corporal works of mercy. Alas ! that any should be found, who, of all the virtues required by the laws of chivalry, care only to cultivate its daring bravery ! But my work is not quickened by this converse ; thou mayest leave me, Sanchiza, and when Donna Maria is stirring, ask her to step hither.”

The bower-maid withdrew, and Donna Inez with redoubled earnestness plied her skilful needle ; unconscious of fatigue, and only wishing that noon were past, in order that she might cover with silk the graceful design she had prepared.

Her thoughts meanwhile dwelt on the stately figure and winning manners of Donna Maria de Zibieria. She had discovered that her hostess was a widow, and that the pale intellectual youth (numbering, perhaps, some eighteen years) whom she sometimes met in the corridors through which she occasionally passed, was her

son ; and Inez rightly guessed, that other motive than the mere wish for company in her large old house during the winter months, had induced her to share it with strangers. In truth, the good widow, though of gentle birth, and allied by marriage to a noble but decayed family, was not so well supplied with worldly comforts, as to disdain an honourable means of increasing her slender income ; family pride having induced her to submit to any privation, rather than quit the mansion inhabited by her husband's progenitors for nearly a century.

In the conversation which took place between the ladies, Donna Maria most readily accorded her advice to the motherless girl, whose previous nurture and habits had unfitted her for the cares that threatened her. The good widow soon discovered the trouble that pressed most closely, and after promising to use all her influence in behalf of the faithful attendants who now but encumbered the shattered fortunes of the house that had long sheltered them, she observed with a sigh : “ But the time is long

since past, when the happy wife of Don Henriquez de Zibriera was surrounded by wealthy friends, among whom it would have been easy to have found a vacancy for a bower-maiden or trusty squire ! Ah, the losses of Don Sebastian have indeed been great, but he retains yet his chiefest treasure. How often have I wished that mine had been a daughter ! But God's will be done ! Henriquez hath ever been a duteous son, though given to studies that will, I fear, bring him little good."

As Donna Maria arose to depart, Inez falteringly said,—“ I have yet another request, señora, if I trespass not on thy time,”—and stepping towards the embroidery frame, she uncovered the part already completed. The matron inspected it with no unpractised eye, and pronounced its design exquisite, and its colours brilliant and well arranged. “ It is the orphrey of a cope, I perceive,—is the hood completed ? ”

“ No, nor yet begun. In truth, señora, I hope to make the darling amusement of more prosperous days, avail now to the amending of our

scanty means. I have before told thee, that the only being to whom we could apply here, is now in England; and during the time that may elapse ere his return, I know not what exigences may arise. Thou, Donna Maria, mayest perhaps find a purchaser for my work?"

"Blessings on thee, sweet lady! God only knoweth what destiny betides us all, but methinks far other fate awaiteth thee, than that of a poor embroidress! Yet, we must patiently accept our allotted portion, whatever it be; and gladly do I assure thee, that for such exquisite work, there be no lack of purchasers in Lisbon."

The conference was now terminated by the entrance of Don Sebastian; and Donna Maria, after exchanging with him a few respectful greetings, retired.

And if a sigh escaped the good widow, at the thought that her new inmates would prove less lucrative than she had expected, it was followed by a glow of thankfulness, for having been permitted to witness and aid the exertions of the devoted daughter.

CHAPTER XI.

“ And oft his smooth and bridled tongue
Would give the lie to his flushing cheek:
He was a coward to the strong :
He was a tyrant to the weak.
* * * * *
And such were we.” SHELLEY.

It was on the morning following the day on which occurred the events narrated in the last chapter, and the hour scarce midway betwixt sunrise and noon, that the partisans of the wily flatterer of Alphonso, were collected within a spacious audience chamber, in one of the stateliest palaces of Lisbon.

The apartment was lofty, and of a length disproportioned to its width, which gave it somewhat the appearance of a gallery. Tall mulioned windows, reaching from floor to ceiling,

occurred at regular intervals along one side, each forming a distinct and deep recess, within the thickness of the wall. Heavy curtains of blue silk hung beside them, and their massive stone tracery, and the rich hues of their storied panes, softened the light which was reflected from the opposite side of a quadrangle, on which the sun's rays directly fell. The walls of the room were painted in the quaint and formal style of the earliest dawn of the arts, and against them were arranged couches covered with tapestry, and ornamented with gildings, in the gorgeous but heavy fashion newly introduced by the luxurious Florentines.

Above the entrance door ran an elevated minstrel gallery—an indispensable addition to the festive hall in that age; and over a similar door at the farther extremity of the room, which led to the private closet of the noble owner, appeared his crest. It was the head of a boar, of enormous size, which, though carved in wood, was covered with the skin of the animal, and

displayed a pair of immense tusks. On each side of the entrance stood a costly table of silver. One of them supported a Paduan time-piece, with its cumbrous and complicated machinery ; which indicated not only the hour of the day, the sun's course in the ecliptic, and the places of the planets, but also controlled the movements of sundry automaton figures, and must have taxed to the utmost the far-famed skill of Giacomo Dondi himself. The other table was strewed with small heaps of parchment, tinted with various devices. This was the celebrated invention of Frenu, then known only as a favourite and innoxious amusement, though by perverted natures converted in after years, into a maddening and fearful evil.

Several *fidalgos*, and a few of the higher class of nobles, were loitering in the audience hall thus faintly described ; anxious for an interview with him through whom the ear of the sovereign was easiest reached, and (report said) his will influenced by those having pleas of

doubtful justice to urge. There, were collected all, who, unable to obtain the confidence of the "rising sun," made therefore more devoted court to the aged monarch. Alphonso had ruled Portugal more than twenty years, but in the whole of that time had exhibited no single trait of resemblance to his wise and patriotic father, Dennis the Good; and now beginning to weary of his own restless will, the very turbulence which rejected the influence of his truest friends and servants, aided the artifice and cunning of his unprincipled favourite and *Conceira M6r**.

Of the courtiers who awaited the appearance of the haughty count, some traversed the room, or reclined on the couches, whiling away the time in light and aimless converse; several of the younger nobles were collected round the card-table, which was one of the novelties of the day; whilst a few watched with curious eyes the ceaseless movements of the timepiece. But there were two of the glittering crowd, who de-

* Chief Chamberlain.

serve more than a passing notice. They had withdrawn into the recess of a window, and though their dissimilar appearance and years indicated little community of interests or feelings, yet was it evident from their earnest and whispered words, that they were debating some affair of vital importance to both. One was under the middle height, and his muscular limbs were so clumsily built, as to border on deformity; their ungainly awkwardness being but ill concealed by a wide cloak of purple velvet bordered with miniver, which left little of his under dress visible, save the collar of his tunic, and some portions of his richly embroidered Cordovan boots. In his hand was a wide hat containing a single black feather, and enriched with a massive clasp of gold; and as he with an upturned gaze regarded his more stately companion, he displayed irregular features of that marked character which once seen are seldom forgotten. His hair, and carelessly trimmed beard, were slightly grizzled, and deeply set were the keen dark eyes that

shone beneath his irregular and heavy brows. This was Don Alvaro Gonzalez, one of the higher class of nobles, of whom report averred, that he was more fully in the confidence of Alphonso, than the favourite was willing to believe.

His companion, a man of far more youthful appearance, could boast of a tall, and not ungraceful figure, and features that would have been handsome, had not they been marred by that indescribable, loose, and unspiritual expression, which an uncontrolled career of dissipation never fails to stamp on its votaries. His lofty and somewhat protuberant forehead was very contracted, particularly at the upper part; his hair and short beard were trimmed with neatest exactness, and his costly dress arranged with the scrupulous care which denotes the consciousness of a fine person.

Beside him, on the ground, lay a hat of graceful form, surmounted and almost covered by a splendid plume of snow-white feathers; and the

golden loops of a chain which appeared to confine them, were secured by a sparkling jewel. He wore a tunic of palest rose-coloured satin, enriched with elaborate embroidery; and a short mantle of dark green velvet, heavy with costly laces and enrichments of gold, was gracefully suspended from his shoulder. As he conversed with Gonçalez in low tones, he trifled with a massive chain of gold which hung around his neck, or occasionally handled the hilt of a Toledo blade, the sheathed point of which protruded from beneath his cloak. The name of this worthy was Diego Pacheco, and he owed it to a weak vanity, which (he being only a fidalgo) was flattered by the supposed confidence of two of the proudest nobles in Portugal, and to the necessities produced by his reckless extravagance, rather than to innate depravity, that he gradually became the unflinching accomplice of his dark-souled associates.

As the day wore on, and Don Pedro de Caelho appeared not, some signs of impatience began to

be exhibited by one or two of his less servile courtiers ; and stern glances were directed towards the closed door, through which he was wont to enter the hall. Little, however, did the proud nobles dream, how humble was the individual whom Caelho entertained ; whilst they awaited his leisure, and cooled as they might their chafed blood in his audience chamber.

The count's private closet was separated from the crowded hall, by a narrow corridor, at each end of which stood a page. The apartment was small but luxurious, and contained a single oriel window, which overlooked the city. Its walls were hung with rich tapestry, illustrative of various subjects from scripture history,—for the loom had not yet learned to revive the voluptuous fables of heathenesse, for the adornment of Christian dwellings. On a low couch, formed and ornamented after the fashion of the Moorish ottomans, reclined the count, sumptuously attired, and glittering with jewels, in anticipation of an audience of his sovereign, (the hour for as-

sembling in the *sala de conego** being close at hand,) and before him stood no greater a personage than the merry purchaser of Guidal.

“ Well,” said the Conceira Môr, in continuation of a conversation which it is needless to transcribe,—“and didst thou, taking advantage of thy good fortune, so far gain his confidence, as to learn if poverty hath begun to chafe the proud blood of his lord?”

“ Ah ! señor, I was so diverted by the poor fellow's scrupulous honesty, as he counted over the money of which we had plundered his people, that whilst I was enjoying before-hand the mirth I had in store for my brethren, I suffered him to depart without endeavouring to sift him.”

“ Fool !” exclaimed Caelho, fiercely.—“ Thou deservest thy neck wrung for thy ill-timed mirth !”

“ Fair and softly, señor,” replied the other, —doubtless already recognised as the Gitano Gheran,—and he sternly bent his dark brows :—
“ I came hither of my own free will, hoping to do

* Council-chamber.

thee pleasure, in return for the rich booty thou didst enable us to procure:—but I would have thee remember that the Rommany is no man's slave.

“Bandy not words with me,—but complete thine errand, if thou hast aught else to say.”

“Well, an' it please thee, I tracked the squire to his dwelling——”

“Where was it?” eagerly interrupted the count, with a glance of malignant joy.

“I know not the name by which the Rua is called, and feared to ask it of the neighbours, but—nay, be not impatient, señor,—I well noted the place, and can easily guide thee thither.”

“’Tis useless till I know something of their circumstances.”

“And therein I believe I can pleasure thee; for just as the city began to awake after the noontide quiet, I cautiously hovered near the spot, and soon beheld Perez, down-looking, and heavy of step, like a wretch doomed to dangle on the highest tree. Whilst he slowly passed along the narrow Rua, I made a swift circuit, and

managed so well, that at a sudden angle I ran full against him." The merry mood of the Gitano got the better of his awe, and a broad grin relaxed his grotesque features, and redoubled the twinkling of his mischief-seeking glance.

"Get on ! and a murrain take thy gaiety !" growled the noble.

"Nay, an' ye forbid Gheran his merry mood, e'en end his life at once,—for he was born laughing, hath lived laughing, and will die laughing, an' his nature change not. But every beast after its kind !" A cunning glance, unperceived by Caelho, accompanied the last sentence, and the Gitano proceeded :—"Perez recognised me, and as we strolled together, I spoke of my numerous acquaintances in Lisbon, though in truth, save thyself, señor, *he* is the only being I ever knew in it. However, I mentioned at random the names of several knights and nobles, thine among them, as thou badest me. And truly the bait took, he caught at thy name, and soon recollected having seen thee at Toledo. I proposed

to inform thee of his master's arrival, but he preferred to discover first the old knight's wishes, and impart them to me to-morrow. Ere we parted, he prayed me to procure him an appointment in some noble household, in order that he might not encumber his good lord, who no longer needed him."

"Ha !" cried Caelho, "the charm works !"

"Not knowing whether the qualities of Perez were of a nature to be convenient to thee, señor," continued the Gitano with a roguish leer, which he took care should be unobserved, "I made the largeness of my promises supply for their vagueness, and informed him that there were numbers of knights in Lisbon, who, though poor as pilgrims, diminished not their crowd of retainers, nor the richness of their braveries. His eager inquiries gave me an opportunity of commencing the subject on which thou gavest me such careful instructions. I called not the man an Israelite, but described him as a good-natured old man, whose delight was to assist gallants possessing

spirits disproportioned to their means. The good squire took it well—promised to impart my wondrous news to his lord, and agreed to meet me again this morning.—Now have I leave to laugh, señor ?”

Caelho made no reply, but paced the room for some moments with rapid strides ; his countenance the while glowing with exultation. At length he turned to Gheran, who stood grinning to his heart's content, and exclaimed,—“Thou hast well observed my instructions, and shalt not lack reward,—but harkye !—those *alforgas* ye were in such haste to call your own, were my bribe for this, and yet more important services ; and woe be thy tribe if they labour less zealously because paid beforehand !—Interrupt me not—I need not thy protestations,—thy interests are my security. The time wears, and I must be brief, therefore mark me well. Thou wilt see Perez to-day ;—by his master's reply touching myself, I shall know if he hath discovered my share in the late affray, and by his reception of information respecting the money-lender, will

our future steps be determined. Should Perez be authorised to treat with the old man, appoint to-morrow at this hour, and conduct the usurer thyself to the old knight's dwelling. I would not Perez should behold the house of the miser. It would be well, too," he added after a moment's reflection, "that *thou* await the Jew in the street; there may be eyes within the dwelling more scrutinizing than those of the unsuspecting squire."

"And when shall I inform thee, señor, what my success hath been?"

"To-morrow, at sunset, come hither by the postern as thou didst to-day. Thou mayest now depart." He drew aside the tapestry, and touching a spring, a small panel revolved, and disclosed a page, who conducted the Gitano from the presence of his patron. The latter paced a few times the confined apartment, and as soon as he had smoothed his marked features into an expression of bland composure, he summoned the page who waited in the corridor. "How wears the day, de Hita?"

“ It wants scarce two hours to noon.”

“ By Heaven ! I shall be full late at the Council,” he hastily muttered. At a given signal the doors flew open, and he hastened to greet his assembled friends ; when Gonçalez and Pacheco starting from the window where they had held their close conference, were the first of the throng to salute their leader.

Many a noble there could boast more advantages of birth and intellect, and far more nobility of form than were possessed by him to whom all did homage ; but it was not difficult to perceive that for the power he wielded, he was far more indebted to his unscrupulous cunning, than to the mighty grasp of a towering intellect, or the graces of a polished mind. Fittest was he to govern, whilst he flattered to servility, a monarch whose impetuous will brooked neither the control of reason nor the mild checks of religion.

With the supple smile of a hollow courtesy, the Conceira Môr exchanged greetings with the assembled nobles ; and regretting his detention,

which he attributed to pressing business of state, remarked that as the day was so far advanced, he must immediately hasten to the royal palace.

Discontent and disappointment weighed heavily on many a heart, though the tutored eye betrayed no feeling but ready acquiescence; and the glittering crowd, all smiles and courtesy departed. As the count on his fiery steed took his way to Monte Môr, where the court then resided, his cruel mind exulted in the poverty and difficulties with which his artifices had surrounded the worthy old knight, formerly his liberal entertainer. But amid all his pomp and power and luxury, he was distracted with the tortures which an evil mind never fails to inflict upon itself; for they who would make a hell of God's earth, ever begin by creating one within their own hearts.

Far from him was the peace of mind of the resigned sufferer, or the cheerfulness that can exult in another's happiness, whilst beset with cares! Far from him the gladsome thoughts

that blessed the innocent and hopeful heart of Donna Inez ! All unconscious that the serpent eye of her foe was once more fixed upon her, and his deadly coils already preparing to encircle her, she occupied the very hour in which he plotted so successfully to annihilate her peace, in comploting the splendid orphrey ; exulting the while that she had discovered a means of insuring her father the comforts so greatly needed by his failing health. Beside her, the while, reclined her beloved parent, deeply occupied with the contents of a manuscript, in which the gospel maxims, rendered applicable to the daily cares of life, had been traced by the patient hand of some secluded monk, whose only guerdon was the devout memento which he entreated, and not in vain, on its concluding page. Thence did the good knight gather some hints of that true wisdom which elevates the mind above the cares and joys of a delusive world,—and gradually acquired a more trustful confidence in the Providence who had hitherto protected him. Already

did Donna Inez observe, as she occasionally raised her head from her work, to scan his composed features, that the peace shed over his mind gave the best promise of returning health ; and whilst she busily plied her slender fingers, she forgot not to bless God for his plenteous mercies.

Had the high-born lady known only the transition from her stately Castilian home, to her present obscure abode, she might have pined for the luxuries that had been to her as indispensable necessities, or at least painfully regretted the pleasures which had formed the sole occupations of her childhood and early youth. But the perils of her journey had exercised a healthful influence on her mind ; and her present circumstances, though promising but a life of labour, appeared replete with happiness, when contrasted with the dreaded fate that had twice menaced her.

Whenever she dwelt on the events of their flight from Spain, it was inevitable that the remembrance of the noble knight, who, without a

motive that could be traced to selfishness, so nobly protected and guided them, would frequently intrude upon the lady's solitary hours. It formed indeed her chief amusement whilst engaged in her sedentary occupation, to wander in the boundless regions of conjecture, and endeavour to assign "a local habitation and a name" to her unknown friend. She clothed him in all the attributes with which a young and enthusiastic mind is too apt to invest the earthly idol, whom some chance has saved from displaying those defects that must ever form an alloy in the most perfect child of humanity. O doubt, and uncertainty, and vague conjecture ! most dangerous are ye to the peace of youthful hearts ; for ye deck the vision of the dreamer with a glorious halo, the brightness of which increases in intensity as the obscurity around it deepens. Vast is your subtle power,—and the image that under your influence is presented to the mind, too surely fixes itself there indelibly ! But all unconscious was Donna Inez that dan-

ger could arise from her innocent thoughts ; admiration she believed to be demanded by noble qualities wherever displayed,—gratitude, a duty doubly owed to him who had twice saved her from an abhorred and enforced marriage. Whilst, therefore, her father read with profound attention the instructive page, and the fair girl inserted and intertwined the glowing threads of silk or gold, her unguarded mind recalled every word and gesture of the brave and graceful stranger, and nicely weighed the chances that might some day occasion them to meet again. So completely did her busy thoughts lure her from things around, that when, after some hours spent in reading, Don Sebastian laid down his book, and fixed on his child a look of regretful fondness, she marked him not ; but started on his exclaiming, in a tone half repining and half resigned,—“ Well !—nothing remains for us, I suppose, but to sit down contented with our destiny ! By and bye, perhaps, the last scion of the noblest house in Spain may be content to

arrange her own head-gear, or even to instruct the children of some Lusian upstart in the mysteries of the guitar, or the cunning of embroidery! Ah me! and is it pride that makes my bosom swell almost to bursting when I think such a fate awaits my Inez,—my beautiful! my idolized! I tell thee, girl, even this Donna Maria (who with all her kindness forgetteth not that she was once the wife of some landless fidalgo) would have thought herself highly favoured, could she have beheld thy beauteous mother, as, on her snow-white palfrey, its caparisons glittering with jewels, she rode attended by a countless retinue to witness the gay tourney without the walls of Toledo!”

“My mother?” sighed Inez, mournfully.
“Alas! I never knew the blessing of her smile!”

The knight heard not her regretful murmur; for he was absorbed in the amusement so delightful to old age, of dwelling on past pleasures; and with a glistening eye he described to his daughter in all its minutest details, a most

splendid and triumphant pageant which he had witnessed in his youth.

The mid-day meal was served, with a simplicity, however, little according with the good knight's reminiscences, and was followed by the customary siesta.

That hour of almost universal rest, Inez cheerfully spent at her embroidery, and ere her father had returned from his chamber, the orphrey was completed. She removed it from the frame with an exultation she had never experienced before, and when Donna Maria visited them in the evening, heard her judicious approval with renewed delight.

"Yes, yes, 'tis very beautiful," observed Don Sebastian; "but methinks 'twould be far more conducive to thy health, to inhale the breezes from the balcony, than to spend every evening over that 'broidery frame."

"I thank thee, dearest father, and will gladly devote this evening, at least, to thy solace and

amusement. Shall thy chair be drawn nearer to the window?"

"Not now, Inez; I perceive a sudden change in the atmosphere, which an hour ago was more than usually oppressive;—the breeze from the open casement already chills me. Either the climate, Donna Maria, is extremely variable, or my frame is become most acutely sensitive; for even amidst the heats of noon I can sometimes detect a cold current, which methinks must be scarce welcome at the angles of the streets."

"Whenever a northern wind prevails, such is the case, señor; but the sudden change now so remarkable, denotes, I fear, the approach of one of our dreadful autumnal storms."

As she ceased to speak, the echo of distant thunder rolled majestically above them, and the tramp of feet rapidly traversing the street, came up from below. The shopkeepers hastened to gather in their exposed wares, and the sharp sound of closing casements was heard on every side. Inez was inexpertly endeavouring to

fasten the window, when a figure muffled in a hooded cloak, cast, in passing, a hasty glance towards it;—she scarcely marked him, however, for the heavy spots of rain that splashed on the balcony admonished her that the storm was at hand. “Why doest thou not summon Sanchiza,” asked her father, observing the unskilfulness of her attempts to secure the clumsy fastenings.

“Because I desire to be no longer helpless, dearest father;—see, ’tis done!” And Donna Maria’s maid having lighted the cresset that illuminated the apartment, the lady drew the silken curtains, which excluded the remaining daylight, and even, in some measure, the vivid flashes of the storm. Then leaning over her father’s pallid brow, she whispered with a playful smile: “Have I not convinced thee, my beloved sire, that Sanchiza, with all her worth, is not *quite* indispensable?”

CHAPTER XII.

"The storm awakes !

And tones of thunder thrill the heart of Earth ;
The lightnings cleave the clouds, and north and south
And east and west, a tale of darkness tell !"

Montgomery.

THE oppressive heat of an autumnal atmosphere charged with the accumulated effluvia of a large and populous city, had suddenly given place to chilling blasts, and these rushing down the steep streets that descended towards the river, formed powerful eddies at the corners of the intersecting thoroughfares. Unlike the winds common even amid the heats of summer to that southern metropolis, which stealing through the pent streets, are (save where at some abrupt angle the pedestrian encounters their rudest greetings)

welcomed as a relief, though perilous to health. The autumnal blast rushed over the city, displacing whatever resisted its fury, and howling amidst the multiplied angles of the storied buildings ; for the inhabitants had not then learned the danger of erecting lofty dwellings in a volcanic land. Well, however, did they understand the meaning of the moaning blast. The crowds who had begun to assemble at the Praça, as was usual in the long balmy evenings, drew their wide cloaks around them, and hastily separated ; whilst the living tide, which had poured out of their closely-ranged dwellings a short time before, were now returning to seek refuge within them.

Soon was heard the solemn burst of thunder, prolonging its peals amidst the hills overlooking Lisbon, though as yet too distant to lose its grand yet awful music in its crashing horrors. A dark and lurid cloud, its heavy masses whirled to and fro by contending blasts, gradually extended itself over the city, which appeared

mutely expectant of the coming tempest; for even the dogs, that unowned dwelt therein, shrunk from the silent streets, and crouched, trembling and dismayed beneath their overhanging gables.

Scarcely a human form appeared in any part of the hushed metropolis, which usually displayed at this favourite hour its gayest crowds; but here and there, at well-known spots, a few stout and slightly clad Gallegos, heedless of inconvenience or danger, awaited the torrent which they well knew would soon rush down the precipitous streets, and compel such as had not been able to escape the storm, to accept their aid.

Large drops of rain were falling from the widely spread fringes of the thunder-cloud, when a slight and bending form, wrapped in a threadbare cloak, which entirely enveloped his spare figure and sharp visage, stole with rapid steps over the uneven pavement of a small street extending along the abrupt hill which still forms the eastern portion of the city. Passing the stately Basilica, whence floated the sweet melody

of the vesper hymn, he paused not to revere the Mystic Presence in the sanctuary; having apparently but one thought or purpose, which was, to escape from the gathering storm. His hasty steps and drooping figure were remarked and recognized by a party of Gallegos, who were gaily conversing at a corner, which from its peculiar situation promised to give a fearful rapidity to the waters of the thunder-cloud, and good store of reis to reward their proverbial hardihood.

"Here comes the rich beggar, Joas!" exclaimed one of them; "behold what haste he makes lest the rain should mar his velvet cap, which hath been unconscious of a pile within the memory of man."

"Nay, nay; say rather his fears point to the possibility of a few reis being compelled into thy pouch, stout Antonio."

"Little reason hath he to tremble for his stores," replied the first speaker;—"doest thou believe there is a Gallego in all Lisbon who ever weighed his carcass?"

"Such service would, at any rate, deserve the pay of ten Christians," said another; "and in all likelihood, receive no pay at all. Who ever knew Joas carry coin in his pouch? It would be"—and the gruff voice of the merry porter was exchanged for a treble squeak—"Save ye, fair son!—bear me but safely through these running waters, and though so very poor am I, that I have not wherewithal to requite thee now,—doubtless one day,—yes, one day, my son—' and off would the miser shuffle, leaving thy pouch not a whit the heavier for thy luckless labour."

"Well, I would not refuse the poor wretch a lift at a pinch," replied the first speaker,—“provided, mind ye—” and he lowered his voice, for the object of his remark was approaching,—“provided I might souse him well in the passage.”

The loud laugh that followed this mischievous speech, was not unnoticed by the despised Joas, who probably guessed from the glances they directed towards him, something of the nature of their conversation. A hasty look from beneath

his eyelashes was, however, all the notice he took of the merry mountaineers, and quickening his steps, he turned round the corner where they stood, and descending the steep path, soon reached another street at the foot of the hill, and not far from the banks of the river. It was probably the narrowest thoroughfare in the city, for the upper stories projecting on both sides, nearly met in the centre. In brightest day therefore it must have been but gloomy, and now that the coming storm had anticipated the evening shadows, was nigh involved in utter darkness. Onward, however, went the Israelite,—for to that unhappy race did the well-known Joas belong; his steps being but little arrested by the obscurity of the way, with which he appeared perfectly familiar. On a sudden he dived under one of the projecting gables, and drawing a huge key from his bosom, unlocked a door which the surrounding gloom rendered imperceptible, save to an eye accustomed to the locality. Having entered, cautiously re-locked the door, and re-

turned the key to its hiding-place, the miser, apparently regardless of the thunder that continued to reverberate amidst the hills to the north and west of the city, passed through several dark passages, and small rooms, all bare and tenantless, and at length reached one, which bore some signs of being inhabited. On its hearth smouldered the phantom of a fire, beside which stood a ponderous oaken chair, black with age. A large chest, rudely made, but of great strength, and displaying a ponderous lock, stood in one corner, and a few well worn articles of dress were bestowed in various parts of the chamber, with a degree of care which evinced that if they had neither freshness nor novelty to recommend them, they were at least valued for their antiquity. On one side of the room a narrow window, dimmed by accumulated dust, gave indistinct hint that there *was* a sky without, but permitted little of its joyous light to struggle with the gloom within; and the discoloured ceiling in which the dark time-stains had collected and amalgamated into

one dusky hue, hung frowningly above the low and blackened walls.

The Jew was evidently a dweller in this inviting abode,—for he glanced around it with a look of satisfaction as nearly approaching the delighted expression the countenance wears on reaching a loved home after a weary absence, as that gloomy dwelling might resemble the sweet abiding-place of happiness and affection.

Joas carefully removed his outer garments, and deposited them with much tenderness in a corner ; and as he did so, exposed the robes of faded silk, trimmed with fur, (in many places worn quite bare,) that enveloped his small and shrunken limbs. His face was pale and extremely wrinkled, his long beard scanty and nearly white ; and a small silk cap covered his head, reaching nearly to his shaggy and grizzled brows. His dark eyes rose with remarkable prominence from their hollow sockets, and the shrivelled eye-lids which clung around the eye-balls with fearful distinctness, dropped half over

the pupil, giving an imbecile expression to a countenance possessing the indescribable cast of features which has been in every age distinctive of the Hebrew wanderers.

As if glad to repose his weary limbs, the old man sat for a little space in the rude chair, and fixed his filmy eyes on the dim window, against which the broad splashing rain now beat with increasing rapidity. After resting for a few moments, he, with a faint groan, as if the effort were fatiguing, opened a low cupboard. Selecting thence a few small pieces of dried stick, he placed them on the slumbering fire, and stirring the dying embers, soon beheld them ignite. As the thin flame ascended, he said in feeble tones : —“ Aha, there is a good fire,—a very good fire. But stay, Joas, why art thou so wasteful of thy fuel ? Is not winter coming, and do not the cold northern blasts easily chill thy blood ? Aha, good Joas, be careful—be careful,—for verily less wood will do !” And taking from the fire two or three of the small sticks, the wretched

miser thrust his foot on the ends that had already caught the blaze, and returned them to the cupboard. Then bending over the crackling flames, he rubbed his withered hands, and giving way to a habit which had sprung from his solitary existence, soliloquised in low murmurs. "Aha! 'tis very well,—the good fire warms my poor aged limbs; ah Joas! 'tis a sign that thou art growing old, or thou wouldst not, ere the vintage is past, be expending at least three reis in warming thy chilled bones. Well, well, no matter,—is not warmth better than meat? And will not the horn of Muscadine I drank whilst we talked about the bond, save me the expense of another meal this night? Then be not troubled, good Joas; thou canst well afford a little fire.—Ah, let me see, let me see," and fumbling in his bosom, he brought thence a piece of parchment, which holding down close to the fire, he perused attentively by the scant light from the flames; then with a low chuckle thrust it again into his bosom, exclaiming :—"Yes, yes, it will do;—

5,000 crusadoes lent to the young fidalgo, who on the death of his father contracts to pay me 8,000. And what matters it that I know well how few months the sickly old noble hath to live? Can I help it if these bitter northern blasts soon speed to him his last honours, and to me my beautiful gold pieces, increased to nigh double their number? No,—but I may e'en warm my numbed limbs without fear! And let me see, good Joas; let me see—the storm cometh nearer and nearer—let me see if there be not comfort left,—some small remaining comfort, (notwithstanding the gibes of the world, and even the reproaches of some among mine own tribe,) for a poor weak old man;—aye, a *very* poor old man!” Whilst he thus muttered, he had lighted a small lamp, and had drawn a heavy curtain of surge before the window; which, however, could have availed but little the most prying eye, since even the vivid flashes of lightning that now became frequent, were obscured as they streamed through its filthy case-

ment. The miser's care, however, prevented the most distant danger from a neighbour's curiosity; and gliding towards, and unlocking the ponderous chest, he with a chuckle of delight turned over several bundles of parchment, and carefully placing the bond he had just read, amongst them, muttered :—" There, I have brought you a new acquaintance—make much of him—make much of him, for he will not tarry long!" Then reclosing and carefully securing the chest, he approached the darkest corner of the room, and opened a door by which he entered a small windowless closet, [apparently formed within the thickness of the wall. He carefully locked himself within that narrow chamber, cast a scrutinizing glance around him, and applying his long thin fingers to a spring in the wall, a low pannel slid aside, and disclosed a small recess. Before this the miser kneeled, and attentively regarded a small chest of iron, which was carefully secured with bars and locks and complicated fastenings. These he deliberately removed, and

having turned the key, paused a moment, and gazed on the closed lid with a grim smile, as if he were inflicting on himself a suspense which should enable him more fully to appreciate the happiness he was about to enjoy. Then throwing open the lid, he took a long and ardent gaze of unqualified delight, at the hoarded gold that nearly filled it. But in a few moments a cloud passed over his features, and slowly he muttered:—“Alas! this morning it was full to the brim, and the hot-headed noble, to whom I have entrusted those precious sums, will fling them around him unheedfully! Yet, it is not to be regretted,” he added, in a more cheering tone;—“I have indeed decreased my store, but will it not more abound by and bye? Yes, yes! it shall soon be again full, and running over!” He thrust his thin hands amidst the glittering coin, and murmured:—“Aye, they sneer at me,—and regard me with looks of scorn, calling me ‘miser,’ and ‘dog of a Jew;’—but do I not know that every one, from the highest to the lowest,

would crouch at my feet for more or less of these yellow pieces ? What, then, is the difference 'twixt them and me !—only this, that I, having them, prize them carefully ; and they, possessing none, affect to despise them !

“ That thoughtless youngster on whom I took compassion this day, (by virtue of his bond !) he raved about eyes that would impart new youth to my aged limbs, by one bright glance,—smiles that would invigorate and quicken the languid pulses of my heart,—and a voice whose melody was as the music of the spheres !—Bah ! bah !—*his* frantic dream will soon dissolve, leaving nothing but bitterness behind ; but not so *my* passion. The sparkling glance of gold fadeth not, nor turneth cold ;—lo ! as I pour it over my hands, its merry glance maketh me insensible to age or grief, hunger or cold,—whilst the melody of its ringing voice hath a song whose meaning it is easy to discover ; yes, it tells me that the proud and the powerful, the beautiful and the young, are, whilst I own this spell, prostrate at

my feet!" As he listened with a countenance beaming with the sickly joy of dotage to the tinkling metal, the thunder rolled and burst above him unheeded. But another sound struck his startled ear, and hastily reclosing the box, he returned the sliding panel to its place with a heavy groan. Ere unfastening the door, he cast yet another glance around to satisfy himself that all was safe; and taking up the lamp, hurried from the narrow closet.

And now the loud and reiterated knockings which had faintly reached him in his secret storehouse, echoed through the empty rooms of the desolate dwelling; and Joas hastened with lamp in hand through the winding and gloomy passages, to the entrance door. The merciless blows, which some heavy hand unsparingly dealt thereon, for some time prevented the feeble voice of the usurer from being heard without. But when a low and searching voice impatiently replied,—“Tis I,—would ye that I force the door from its hinges?” the trem-

bling hands of the Jew withdrew the creaking bolt; and the door opening, a man entered, whose wide capote appeared drenched with rain. With him also came into the dark and narrow passage, vivid and unintermitting flashes of lightning, whilst the heavy, crashing roar of heaven's artillery, sounded near and ceaseless.

"Is this a night," said the stranger sternly, "to keep one waiting at thy door?—but for the shelter of thy overhanging gable, I had been nearly drowned."

The old man having closed and bolted the door, replied,—“Alas! I am an old man, señor, and my senses are growing dull,—the instant I heard thy knocking I hastened to open my door.”

“Thou must have been deaf to the thunder, an’ thou heardest not the blows that made thy stout timber creak and groan.”

“In truth, señor,” replied Joas, who with his flickering light was leading the way along the passage, “I was not mindful of the tempest.”

“Indeed! it must have been an absorbing study that made thee insensible to such a storm;—counting thy gains, ha, Joas? busy among thy money-bags, I warrant!”

“Money!” exclaimed Joas, his countenance turning ashy pale; “Alas! señor, thou lovest to torment a poor old man! Money, indeed! when thou well knowest, that no sooner have I by thrift and hard industry collected together a few testoons, than some gay gallant like thyself prevails on my easy nature, and obtains my little store; giving me for my broad gold pieces a mere scrap of parchment! Ah me! ah me! for I slave and toil to minister to others’ pleasures!”

“Well, thou pleasest thyself, I suppose; or this wretched existence had not been thy choice. But hast thou no better cheer than this?” he added, as they turned into a small room, not so distant from the door as that the miser occupied.

A few dilapidated chairs and a small table constituted the whole of its furniture; and point-

ing towards one of the former, the Jew took a seat opposite to it, with a look which seemed to say,—“It may surely suffice for the business that brings together such uncongenial associates.” But he replied in a whining tone,—“Alas! how can *I* indulge in luxuries, all whose substance goes to provide them for others?”

“Well, well, it matters little to me,” the other sternly said, as he threw his dripping cloak across the table, and seated himself on the uncushioned chair.

He was attired according to the fashion of the time, in a rich velvet tunic, embroidered with gold; his broad plumeless hat, which he did not remove, partly concealed his features, and by his side hung his slender blade.—“My stay must be brief,” he continued, “but (as thou doubtless guessest by seeing me here) I need thy aid.” The Jew groaned, and he proceeded:—“Nay, ’tis not thy gold that I want,—which in truth, now that thy gripe rests so heavily on my broad lands, would be, I presume, of little use.” The

Israelite looked somewhat re-assured, and his visitor proceeded:—"I have now another plan for replenishing my exhausted coffers;—in fact, good Joas, since all other means appear well nigh exhausted, I am in very truth about to marry!" The old man raised his shoulders, significantly, but made no reply. "I perceive thou marvellest what could have made thee the depository of the tender secret," replied the other, with a sneer;—"the fact is, there are obstacles which thou canst assist me in removing;—nay, look not surprised—I mean not to employ thee as a wooer! Know, then, the lady is coy, and reluctant to accept the proffered honour of my hand." A grim smile flitted over the features of the usurer, which, however, did not escape his guest, for he exclaimed, with a furious voice and flushed features:—"Be sparing of thy sneers, sir Jew,—I brook them not, even from such as thou! Peace! I know it is but thy vile nature to scoff at feelings thou canst not comprehend. I tell thee, then, in brief, that

necessity must compel this reluctant maid to be my wife. She is in this capital with her father, and both are strangers to the land, its laws, and usages. I have taken care to deprive them of the small amount of available wealth they brought with them, and as want is now pressing them sore, to-morrow the old knight will send to thee, and offer a bond for the loan of a small sum. Be sure thou refuse it not; but as it is very unlikely that thou wilt ever again behold thy gold, take special care that the bond is drawn up in the most harsh and exacting form."

If the Jew looked surprised at the commencement of this speech, unqualified astonishment distorted his gaunt features at its close, and when amazement permitted him to articulate, he exclaimed:—"I know not which most to admire, señor, thy expecting to enrich thyself by marriage with a dowerless bride, or requiring me to risk my precious gold in a loan to one whom thou pronouncest destitute!"

"O most wise and wary Joas, I will speedily

relieve thee of thy doubts,—but I marvel meanwhile at thy simplicity in believing me, though but for a moment, the frantic fool thy words describe me. Know then, there are broad lands and great store of gold, to which this lady is undoubted heiress, but which I alone can procure for her, having first obtained the sanction of her hand. Dost thou begin to comprehend me ?”

“ A little, and in part.”

“ Then as regards thyself,”—the Jew nodded, —“ having lent the required aid, thou wilt shortly thereafter press for the fulfilment of the bond,—and I will make the liquidation of it, the price I pay for my coveted spouse. Understand ye now ?”

“ Yes—so far—but meantime, what security have I that my monies be not lost, in the attempt to further this promising scheme ?”

“ I have taken thought for thee, knave. Knowing well, in sooth, that thou wilt never aid another at thine own proper risk.”

“And why should I, señor, seeing that I gain no satisfaction thereby?”

“True, true, and by my halidome, he were mad who could suppose satisfaction in any degree dwelling for a moment in thy shrivelled and bloodless carcass.” A momentary twinkling in the eyes of Joas appeared to contradict the reckless words of the scornful gallant, but his wonted apathetic stare was quickly recovered, and the other without a pause proceeded:—“I will myself sign a bond, promising to return fourfold thy loan, when my plan succeeds, besides paying off, immediately on my marriage, all the heavy engagements which thou well knowest were to rest an indefinite time, and were accordingly fixed at a ruinous rate of interest. Will that content thee?”

The Jew hesitated, and entwining his long bony fingers, appeared to calculate the advantages and disadvantages of the offer,—but the prospect of unexpected and large additions to his hoards, apparently prevailed over his wonted

cautiousness, and producing a small parchment and implements for writing, he proceeded to draw up the bond as agreed. But his guest interrupted him:—"Thou canst call on me, on thy way to the old knight to-morrow, and it shall be duly executed,—I have already staid too long here;"—and he arose to depart.

The peals of thunder which had been rolling above them during their conference, the vivid flashes of lightning that gleamed with scarce a pause through the crevices of the shutter that screened the small window, the howling blast, and the ceaseless splashing of the driving rain, had been all unheeded by those unbelieving professors of two different, though closely connected creeds. But at the moment when the wily visitor rose to depart, and the usurer followed him with his lamp to indicate the winding way,—a sudden and tremendous sound, far surpassing the former thunder peals, burst with a loud explosion over the dwelling of Joas, and a terrific crash admonished them that the

electric fire had struck it. The miser screamed with affright, and throwing himself on the ground, covered his pallid face with his hands, and gave vent to his terror in cries and groans. Not so his stern companion : he had snatched the falling lamp from the relaxed grasp of the Jew in his first start of horror, and when the dreadful sound had ceased, endeavoured to find the door of the house ; cursing the while the hour that brought him to the Hebrew's dwelling. The passage was obstructed by large fragments of granite, which had been forced by the irresistible fluid from the huge blocks that formed the wall ; but clambering over them as he best could, he soon reached the portal.

There he was joined by the yet trembling Jew, who appeared quite as anxious to be quit of his guest, as the other was to escape his scant hospitality ; and they parted, each forgetting his own turpitude, whilst abhorring the blacker guilt of his associate.

Along the street was swiftly gliding a shallow

current, momentarily increased by the rain that still fell in torrents; the thunder, though somewhat more distant, rung its deafening peals around, whilst amid the broad flashes which illumined the gloomy street, fiery arrows of forked lightning darted at times with a brilliancy that bewildered the aching eye-balls. Heedless, however, of all these horrors, the usurer's guest wrapped in his ample cloak, rushed with but slight adieu from the wretched abode of wealth, muttering as he went;—"No wonder the arch-atheist quailed like a chidden hound in despair and terror, whose whole soul is bound to the dust by the least excusable of human idolatries, the worship of gold!"

And as the Jew re-barred and locked his heavy door, and went with trembling knees to ascertain the damage done him by the tempest, his thin and quivering voice exclaimed: "He is gone at last!—cunning and dark-souled villain!—who warreth without ceasing on his own flesh and his own tribe! 'Twould be but fair requital of his

blasphemy of my race, to warn the maiden of his plot and despoil him of his prey !—But hush,—hush Joas ; what wouldst thou gain by such a revenge ? Doth not this new compact render thy gold more sure, and far nearer to thy grasp ? So patience,—patience ! Aha ! he will have a rough passage, for the rain must be, by this time, rushing in torrents down the steep rua he must mount to gain his dwelling. Well ! and what care I, if the rushing stream from the Rua dos Banhos should whirl him into the raging Tagus ?”

CHAPTER XIII.

“ It is the mind that maketh good or ill,
That maketh wretch or happie, rich or poore ;
For some, that hath abundance at his will,
Hath not enough, but wants a greater store ;
And other that hath little asks no more,
But in that little is both rich and wise :
For wisdom is most riches ; fooles therefore
They are which fortunes do my vows devize ;
Since each unto himself his life may fortunize.”
Spenser.

ARISING with the dawn, Inez, as was her daily custom, went forth to attend the morning sacrifice ; not, however, at a neighbouring altar, but in the far-famed church of the abbey of San José, situated in a more western portion of the city. She was accompanied by Donna Maria de Zibrieria ; and Laura, the maid of the latter,

carried the carefully enveloped orphrey. No doubt the success of their mission was implored in their orisons, for on leaving the church, they proceeded to attempt the sale of the precious embroidery. They easily obtained an audience of the abbade, who, when Donna Maria displayed the work, highly extolled its richness and delicacy, and summoning the procurator, purchased it at once. To his request that the matron would procure a hood to match it, Donna Maria gladly assented, and having obtained the blessing of the venerable religious, the ladies and their attendant departed. They soon regained their dwelling, and as they crossed the narrow passage that led from the entrance, Perez met them, his face beaming with smiles, and his step having the elastic lightness which it had lost since he entered his adopted land. He was closely followed by a slender, stooping figure, wrapped in a threadbare cloak, whom the squire dismissed with many cordial adieus. The ladies heeded them not, but Donna Maria

leading the way through the intricate passage, they gained at length a small room, the favourite bower of the good widow. Although hung with faded damask, and its furniture bearing evidence of having done unremitting service for many years, an air of neatness and comfort pervaded the small parlour, and it was not wanting in some few elegant embellishments, indicative of the tastes of the owner. A small window at one end admitted but scanty light through its lozenge-shaped panes, but opposite to it, wide folding doors reaching from floor to ceiling were thrown open, and revealed a small flower-garden, in which a fountain of simple but graceful form displayed a lavish profusion of the element so grateful in a warm climate; its source having probably been renewed by the storm of the previous evening. The little terrace on which the doors opened, led by two marble steps to the level walks of the garden; and Inez, as she entered the room, cast a longing glance towards the little paradise. "Thou art free of

my small plaisance, señora," exclaimed the matron,—“ come hither when it pleaseth thee ; methinks I shall not err in believing thou wilt rejoice to behold some rare shrubs, that are just beginning to flourish there,—and in truth, as they are now covered with blossoms, no better time could I choose than the present for showing them.” Leading the way into her little garden, the good matron pointed to a group of small orange-trees, evidently in the first year of their flowering. “ They are my son's trees,” she resumed, proud to possess plants so rare and beautiful ; “ he has nursed them with tenderest care for three years, and now that they thus repay his labours, hath almost counted their opening blossoms.”

“ They are the first I have beheld since I left home !” sighed Inez, as bending over the trees, she inhaled their well-remembered fragrance, and by the wondrous powers of association, was in an instant restored to the beloved land of her birth, and the luxurious bowers she

had quitted for ever. From her regretful words, and the thoughtfulness that followed them, Donna Maria guessed what was passing in her mind.

“Cheer thee, señora !” she exclaimed, “better days than these will yet be thine ; and meantime, believe me, thou art not the only one on whom woes have been showered, heavy and ceaseless as the autumnal rains !”

Inez returned the friendly clasp that pressed her hand, but her heart was too full to reply, and she bent her steps towards the mansion. Ere they reached it, however, she remarked the pale face of Henriquez at a small upper window, apparently watching over the safety of his flowers.

“Let us not forget,” said Donna Maria, as they re-entered her room,—“the business that brought us hither ; and producing a purse, she poured from it into the hand of Inez, a considerable number of gold pieces, the price of the orphrey.

“I fear I shall grow avaricious,” exclaimed

Inez, who had never been so moved before by the glitter of gold. "Little did I dream, some few weeks ago, that these few monies could confer so much real pleasure. But lest I should err so gravely, I will bestow a portion of my wealth in alms. Take this coin, señora,—thou may'st know some one in this great city, to whom even so small a sum may impart a share of the joy which the amount whence it was taken hath given me. Freely do I give it, for the use of Christ's poor."

As the matron kissed the fair hand of the young almoner, her eyes were suffused with tears.

"I must now hasten to my father, Donna Maria; I fear he will have thought my absence long."

With kind officiousness the good widow offered to attend her to her apartment, but Inez would not permit such unnecessary service, which besides, little accorded with her newly formed resolve to endeavour to become less dependent

than she had hitherto been on the charity of others.

As she swiftly threaded the narrow corridor, her heart bounded with the joyous thought that the means of securing not only ordinary comforts, but also some few luxuries for her aged parent, were in her power. What wonder, if she, to whom the value of money had been hitherto unknown, should now over-estimate it.

On sunny thoughts intent, she but slightly marked the dim mazes among which she wandered, until surprised at not reaching the stairs leading to the upper stories of the house, she paused, and looking around, found that she must have missed her way. Smiling at her own abstraction, and amused by the contrast between her present bewilderment, and that which had so endangered their safety among the wilds, she endeavoured to retrace her steps. The attempt, however, led her yet more astray; she traversed several long corridors, dimly lighted by narrow windows occurring at long intervals in the upper

compartments of the wall, and opening several doors, discovered only bare and unfurnished rooms. Perceiving that she must request assistance from some of the family, she entered a large chamber, from a door at the extreme end of which came the sound of footsteps. As she crossed the spacious anteroom, however, the footsteps ceased, and a low, manly voice, apparently holding impassioned converse, reached her ear, on which these words distinctly fell:—
“Beautiful vision! haunting me ever like a dream of our lost Paradise! By night, by day, ever present; sometimes steeping my soul in bliss, at others, filling it with melancholy. Who thou art—whence thou comest—I know not; but *this* I know, that to dwell for one day in the soft light of thine angelic eyes, were a bliss to purchase which no act of daring or endurance were too arduous. But alas! too surely do I feel, that this form, attenuated by study,—this mind, laden with the dark secret of the sages,—are unfit to inspire the passion which the per-

fect loveliness that embodies the soul's transcendent beauty hath awakened in my bosom. No, I may worship at a distance, content to breathe the air she breathes, and in my secret soul keep a lamp ever burning before her image, but there my hopes end !” Inez had several times tapped at the door, without attracting the notice of the speaker, and anxious to rejoin her expecting sire, she at last ventured to open it, though greatly fearing that she should disturb a lover's conference.

She timidly passed the threshold of the apartment, which contained no other furniture than an old oaken table, and one tall and ancient stool. Manuscripts without number were scattered around, many of them very large, and mostly enclosed in rough boards. Retorts, crucibles, alembics, and a variety of uncouth implements, together with vessels of complicated and distorted forms, of which even the names were to her unknown, were lying near a fire that smouldered on a hearth raised some few feet

above the floor. A single glance sufficed to note these things ; but great was the lady's surprise on perceiving but one individual there ; who, leaning against an open casement, was gazing abstractedly towards the sky. Although his face was towards her, he perceived her not, but continued breathing those fervid words to which Inez was an unwilling listener. He was of small stature, and his slight, but well-formed limbs and beardless chin, would have indicated early youth, but that the hollow cheeks and melancholy thoughtfulness of the pale countenance belied their evidence. The delicate features were somewhat sharpened ; the large dark eyes with an unearthly lustre gleamed, and a profusion of black and glossy hair fell back from a forehead disproportionately large, its heavy curls almost concealing the collar of a closely fitting tunic, which, with the rest of his dress, was arranged with extreme neatness and simplicity. Donna Inez recognised him instantly—it was Henriquez, the son of her hostess. Anxious to arrest his

words, she, after the involuntary pause occasioned by her surprise, laid her hand gently on his arm. The youth started as he gazed on her with bewildered surprise, murmuring unconsciously, —“ It is not a dream !”

Again Donna Inez requested him to direct aright her straying steps ;—he passed his hand over his brow, faltered a few unintelligible words, then leading the way through the anteroom, conducted the lady in so short a time that she felt convinced her steps must have been several times retraced to the entrance of her own apartment. She gracefully acknowledged the courtesy of her conductor, and disappeared ; but Henriquez paused to gaze after her for a moment, then falling on his knees, pressed with his lips the spot whereon her light foot had last rested, and in a few moments had regained his laboratory.

Ere the youth had departed, Inez was in the arms of her father, and with exultant joy displayed the golden harvest gleaned by her fair hands.

“How is this, my love?” asked the knight.
“Whence comes this addition to our scanty store?”

She briefly explained; but great was her surprise at the reception her news received. Starting from his chair in extreme agitation, Don Sebastian for some moments paced the room, uttering only broken ejaculations; but the weakness of his frame soon checked his impetuous feelings, and sinking on his chair, he tremulously said,—
“No more of this, Inez—I entreat—I command! We will retrench and welcome; aye, starve, if need be;—but for my daughter to solicit the patronage of the proud Portuguese!—implore their purchase of her labour!—I tell thee, the very thought would slay me! And thinkest thou I could eat bread so bought? No! by my noble ancestry, amid whose broad lands this very Tagus, on the banks of which we languish here, unknown and unregarded, meanders for many a league—I swear——”

“Nay nay, my father,—hear but one word!

Thou didst ever delight in beholding me embroider for the service or embellishment of the altar,—many an antependium, and fair cope, and splendid stole, aye, and chasubles and apparells have I, aided by my maids and companions, presented to the church. Is there so vast a difference betwixt bestowing the work of my hands, when blest with ample means, and receiving therefor now, the means we need for our sustenance?"

"Yes," cried the agitated nobleman! "it is not to be borne even in thought! Work, an' thou wilt for the church—it is the same in faith and practice here, in Spain, and the uttermost ends of the earth,—but not for hire. For hire!—save my patience!—the thought will drive me mad! Besides, thy father needs it not,—look there!" and drawing from his girdle a heavy purse, he flung it on the table, and silently observed the effect its appearance produced on his astonished daughter.

She hastily poured its contents out,—and

there lay a sparkling heap of broad gold pieces, beside which, her own little sum appeared as nothing. "O, my father!" she exclaimed, whence came this treasure?"

He smiled, but merely replied,—“Trouble not thyself to learn whence it came, sweet one; but as thou art my secretary, e'en use it as thou wilt. Let not that base hire pollute thy hands, —give it to the poor, I'll none of it.”

Inez received this command with considerable pain; she was mortified by finding that not even a smile of approbation rewarded her patient toil. Consoling herself, however, with the reflection that her father had a supply which would allow him time and means for the recovery of their stolen property, she soon forgot her own disappointment, and rejoiced that at least the poor would be benefitted by her industry. Her uncomplaining spirit having acquiesced in the will of him in whom it was not for her to note a fault, she strove to soothe his irritated feelings by reading some portion of the precious manuscript

with which the courtesy of Donna Maria had favoured them. From her innocent lips the apostolical counsels fell like heaven's dew on the soul of the exile; and the low music of her gentle voice attuned his thoughts to peace.

As Inez left her chamber on the following morning, she found on the threshold of its ante-room a small nosegay. It was freshly gathered, for the night dews yet sparkled over leaf and flower; and on raising it to inhale its fragrance, the rich perfume of a spray of orange-flowers betrayed them, nestling amid their shining leaves. Other sweet blossoms were there, but the scent of these overpowered the rest; and Inez, whose love of flowers had of late been lavished on the few myrtles of her balcony, felt grateful for the kindly gift. And from that hour, each returning morn saluted her with a similar present; and ever amid the flowers of various hues, the snowy blossoms of the fragrant orange greeted her, recalling the memory of her beloved Castile. It

was as though some unknown worshipper had made of her bower a shrine, and daily laid on its threshold his beauteous and humble offering.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ No truths
Divine, no energies which pant for heaven
In the cold depths of such a spirit play !”
Montgomery.

THE course of our narrative leads us once more to that luxuriously furnished apartment, wherein the interview was held between the Count d' Ercillia, and his swarthy associate Gheran.

It was just past noon,—through the wide window's open casement softest breezes were beginning to steal, tempering the sultry air within the chamber; and a wide and glorious prospect appeared, stretching far beyond the city, to where wooded heights, and fertile valleys,

and dark green vineyards extended for leagues ; whilst amidst them, with many a bend, winded the glowing waves of the "golden Tagus." Just sufficiently near the window to inhale the first fresh salute of the entering breeze, reclined on a voluptuous couch the lord of that stately dwelling ; and beside him, on a small table, stood a silver dish containing some delicious fruits, of which he occasionally tasted. He gazed not on the smiling prospect, for with nature's charms he felt no sympathy ; but wrapt in moody thoughtfulness, revolved dark and treacherous schemes in his subtile mind.

A muttered soliloquy stole fitfully from his compressed lips, while beneath his bent brows sudden flushes of portentous meaning gleamed. From his low-breathed sentences, some indications may be gathered of the thoughts that were agitating him,—and with the addition of a few connecting words, necessary to render them coherent, they may be thus transcribed :—

“ Yes,—the plot is ripening,—let but this

morning's interview have been successful, and I fear nothing ! Madman that I was, not to trust to this scheme from the first.—But by the holy rood ! the plot was a good one.—How could I dream yon accursed knight was to be ever at my heels, and thrust aside my best laid plans ? Its worst effect, however, is, that she will believe herself justified now in hating me. Yet can I not show her that it was the frantic fervour of my passion which hurried me to such extremes ?—Ha, ha ! what woman could resist such a plea ? Well, no matter, let but that doting knight touch *one* of the Jew's moidores, and I shall not need to cast about for a disguise ; thou art then safely caged, my bird, despite thy feeble flutterings ! Aye !—cold and relentless woman !—when thy father is in the law's fell gripe, it will be my turn to dictate,—and scant courtesy canst thou expect from him whose proffered love thou didst dare despise e'en to the endangering of thy sire's existence. By heavens ! I shame to think I have been so scorned ;—but my hour cometh !

Yes—already, presumptuous and haughty maid! toils thou dreamest not of are gathering around thee!” He paused, for a slight sound caught his ear,—it was thrice repeated, and springing from his couch he exclaimed,—“Now, suspense is at an end!” Then raising the tapestry, he drew back the moveable panel, and Gheran entered the apartment. Its usual self-satisfied smile dwelt on the unreflective countenance of the Gitano,—but Caelho, though he scanned his features with a searching glance, could gain nothing thence, and he impatiently asked—“Well, how speed ye?”

“Right prosperously, noble señor!—the knight hath his gold, and the Jew his bond. So all parties, I trust, may chuckle now.”

An exclamation of delight burst from the Count, and pacing the room with an exultant stride:—“The fates prosper me,” he cried, “I shall succeed at last!” Then turning to the grinning Gheran, added—“and to thy very

heart's content shalt thou be rewarded, my excellent friend."

The Gitano, unperceived, replied with a droll grimace to this suddenly expressed friendship of the proud noble, but as his rapid strides brought Caelho again beside the Egyptian, his singular features assumed their usual vacant smile.

The knight suddenly stopped—"Ha ! *Jew* thou sayest—didst thou then suffer them to suspect he was an Israelite?"

"Thou didst wish me not to do so, señor."

"Answer me !" said the other fiercely.

"The truth is, that when I took Joas this morning to the house, Perez drew me aside and whispered : ' My good friend, I fear my master, who is unaccustomed to the Portuguese features, will mistake this man for one of the Hebrew race.'—'Nay,' I replied, 'if he should do the honest Lusian such injustice, tell him that I have sworn to his being, to my certain knowledge, as thorough, aye and as fervent a christian as myself !' With such an assurance, señor,

he could not fail to be content !” And the Gitano indulged in one of his loud ringing laughs.

“Thou art a sly knave !” exclaimed Caelho, who was not in a mood to be displeased.

“So please ye, señor,” replied the other, “I always strive to profit by the instructions of those I serve !”

The noble's brow darkened, but the vacant countenance of the wild being who stood before him forbade him to suppose that he understood the obvious meaning of his words ; and not caring to enlighten him, Caelho proceeded to learn what further information he had gathered. “Touching myself ;—didst thou gain from Perez his master's feelings respecting me ?”

“Oh yes—I had almost forgotten ! He said that his master spoke of thee with much respect, but appeared reluctant that thou shouldst know of his residence in Lisbon.”

“’Tis well,—we will get over his proud

scruples. Aye, aye ! I thought the fear of my sword would prevent even a woman's babbling tongue from divulging my secret. Would I were as certain yon black knight knew me not—curse on the treacherous helmet that exposed me to his gaze !”

Turning once more to Gheran, he continued his questions. “Hath either Hamet or the hideous Cloton succeeded in discovering any trace of that stranger whom ye wot of?”

“No, señor but they have arranged a plan, whereby, when they *do* meet with him, they believe his detection certain.”

“Ha ! how, I pray thee?”

“Hamet is to steal behind him, and with his Damascene blade, (which with the light touch of a feather can sever aught less hard than steel,) divide the lace of his helmet. Now it being of that make worn by the crusading knights, which having no proper vizor, fastens on one side,—if Cloton can at the same instant strike it with a heavy blow, the warrior's head must inevitably be uncovered.”

"'Tis a feasible plan, if boldly executed !"

"Methinks it of doubtful success,"—urged the Gitano.

"How so ? thou craven !"

"Inasmuch, as that when revealed, his features may be utterly unknown to them, and doubtless his broad blade will quickly prevent their describing them to any who might recognize him."

"Well, well, thou cunning varlet,—leave that consideration to their own sagacity ; they need not thy craft to aid them. Be content that thy own work hath been well done ; go now, and get what refreshment thou wilt,—I would be alone."

The spring was touched, the panel revolved, and Gheran with a low obeisance departed.

And we too will leave the base-souled Caelho, to the entertainment of his restless thoughts ; which ever revolving some deep villainy, were as far removed from peace as from virtue.

To a very different scene do we now turn, and unquestioned as unobserved, enter a large room

which forms in every respect a perfect contrast to that we have just quitted. Its size was considerable, and all the light and air it received were admitted through three skylights in the ceiling, of which the centre one was much the largest. The walls of this apartment were neither adorned with paintings, lined with wainscoting, nor hung with tapestry, but were entirely occupied, from ceiling to floor, by shelves placed at various distances from each other. Upon them rested the productions of innumerable laborious lives, of men whose days had been chiefly spent (as concerns the time given to terrestrial things) in patiently transcribing, for the benefit of an unthankful world, the treasures bequeathed to it by those who had at different eras endeavoured to illuminate its darkness with the lights of science and religion. There were not only found works on holy scripture, history, and classical literature,—but astronomy, physic, the mechanical arts, the abstruse sciences, architecture, agriculture, rhetoric,—every effort which

had yet been made by the human mind, had contributed somewhat to enrich that noble library. And though works in the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew tongues greatly prevailed over all others, yet there were not wanting books written in every language that possessed a literature of its own ;—and all found *readers* in the abode of peace, to which that storehouse of the mind belonged. Some of these written treasures appeared as mere rolls of parchment, some enclosed by covers of vellum were secured with rude fastenings of iron, many of less ancient date were bound in costly and fragrant woods, or enriched with clasps and ornaments of gold ; and numbers glistened with the lustre of gems, whose value was insignificant compared with the priceless treasures of purest wisdom which they guarded. 'Twas indeed a splendid library ; for the loan of its prized volumes kings and nobles oftentimes pledged their costliest valuables.

Long benches and massive tables of simplest construction formed the only furniture in the

apartment ; and the stillness that reigned therein was broken only by indistinct and mingled murmurs from the busy city, which could scarcely have been distinguished from the distant sighings of the ocean.

At the extreme end of the library, beneath one of the smaller lights, sat a venerable old man, clad in dark and flowing robes, which left but his head and hands uncovered. His hair and beard retained but few traces of their original raven hue, but his upright form, and scarcely wrinkled, though pale countenance, as yet held Time at bay. Not so the large book which lay before him on the wide table, for, as he slowly turned its distained leaves, they evinced that it had long wrestled with the fell destroyer. The gentle eyes of the grave old man were fixed on the page he was perusing, with such intense earnestness, that he observed not one, who having noiselessly looked into the library, appeared satisfied that what he sought was there, and without a sound approached the

aged student. The intruder was entirely enveloped in a hooded capote, and as if unwilling to interrupt the good father's studies, seated himself at some small distance from him, and burying his face in his hands, appeared lost in thought. For some brief space thus did he remain, but a deep sigh suddenly betrayed his presence,—and the religious raising his head beheld him with a look of calm surprise. “I was reluctant to disturb thee, father,” said the stranger, with a sad accent, “though I could not absent myself any longer from one who teaches me to endure evils, which even his wisdom and friendship cannot avert.” Whilst he spoke he suffered the capote to glide from his shoulders, and as it sunk to the ground, the unadorned armour and symmetrical figure of the black knight were revealed.

“Welcome, my son!—thou art ever welcome here!” said the venerable father, pushing aside the heavy manuscript. “But wherefore hesitate to address me? May heaven's best blessings be

with thee ever !” he continued, as the young man reverently bent his knee. “ It is some days since I last saw thee, and I remember that thou wert then engaged in a quest, of the wisdom of which I greatly doubted. How fares it, my son ?”

“ So ill, as to be well nigh hopeless ! Alas, father ! had my letter of introduction been addressed to thee, all had been well !”

“ But, my son, the severe ague which prevented my intended journey to England, was a dispensation of Providence, and the appointment of Fra Justinian to go in my stead was made with no other views than those which consulted the success of the mission which he has undertaken ; I cannot, therefore, apprehend any misfortune to arise from the change thou dost so grievously deplore.”

“ How unfortunate that I should have fixed on Fra Justinian ! but in truth it was the very reason that occasioned his absence, (the confidence and high regard with which thou hast

ever regarded him,) that induced me to select him as the friend and protector of these noble exiles."

"Let me recall," said the abbade thoughtfully,—“these exiles whom thou art seeking,—didst thou not say they were Castilians?”

“Certainly, and of noble birth. They are flying from the malevolent hatred of a perverse and powerful suzerain.”

“If noble, is it not strange that they have not been heard of at court?”

“That, reverend father, fills me with surprise and apprehension. The good old knight informed me he should ask the protection of the king immediately on his arrival,—what then can have prevented his doing so? Sometimes I fancy sickness or poverty may be sorely pressing them; for since we parted, I have remembered, what I did not at the time remark, that their sumpter mules were totally unburthened. Or can it be that the monster Caelho hath again tracked them?”—The voice of the knight became

violently agitated, and his hand grasped the hilt of his blade as he passionately exclaimed,—“ I swear to thee, father, that should yon gaunt wolfhound harm that angelic maiden, or her gallant sire,—his blood will be on my soul !”

“ Swear not, my son !” replied the old man, —“ nor rashly breathe threats of murder and revenge !—Methinks thou art changed of late ;—thy nature was wont to be gentle, though the very soul of bravery, and thy temperament, though boasting little of the buoyancy of youth, possessed at least the cheerfulness of resignation. But now thou displayest a startling impetuosity, and a peevish melancholy, for which I perceive no cause. Those things which have long fretted thee are in no respect changed, yet the spirit with which thou hast hitherto borne them is departing.”

There was a mournful earnestness in the old man's voice as he thus spoke, and his companion replied in his former saddened tones,—“ Thou art shrewdly observant of my moods, father,—but

why wonder that my fetters chafe my spirit, and sometimes master my every effort at patient endurance? are they less galling because gilded?—But enough of this—I know my doom! and will endure it, if possible, with a resigned spirit. Indeed 'twas in the hope of forgetting for awhile my unavailing regrets, that I so earnestly devoted myself to the protection of these hapless exiles; that satisfaction denied me, my unoccupied thoughts return to brood over my luckless destiny.”

“Nay, cheer thee, my son!—in truth, thy generous sympathy for these friendless unfortunates is admirable, and if I thought it would restore thy cheerfulness, I have even now thought of somewhat—”

“Ha!”

“Nay 'tis but a slight matter, and may amount to nothing,—but the Spanish features and peculiarly formed mantilla struck me.”

“Proceed, father!” exclaimed the knight, in those breathless tones which accompany the effort to restrain a strong emotion.

The abbade was pondering, as if in the endeavour to recall some circumstance till now but slightly noted, and replied—"A matron——".

"Nay, then, 'tis indeed useless, for she hath scarcely attained the full proportions of womanhood!"

"Permit me, my son!" said the old man mildly,—then continued—"an aged matron this morning brought hither an orphrey for sale. She was accompanied by a younger female and an attendant. The work was exquisite, and I gladly purchased it,—but when, ere departing, they knelt for my blessing, I remarked some peculiarity in the younger lady's dress, and particularly the mantilla, which nearly covered her face."

"Was she tall?"

"Somewhat taller than her companions,—but her height was not remarkable."

"Of queenly bearing?"

"There certainly was an air of extreme dignity in her quiet manners;—'twas impossible not to mark it."

"Eyes, hair, and arched brows as black as the raven's wing?"

"I scarcely saw her face, but think I may venture to say—yes."

"Complexion pure as virgin snow! and long feathered lashes that softened the beam of her lustrous eyes!—'Twas she!" exclaimed the knight, starting from his seat, and not pausing for reply as he in impassioned tones gave vent to his long-controlled feelings. "O tell me, good father, when, where didst thou behold her?—This day didst thou say!—Then is she yet safe, and that vile noble shall be so closely watched as to have no power to harm her! Blessed be God! she is yet safe!"

"They who trust in Him are ever safe, my son," said the abbade, gravely. "And methinks we ought both to bless the Divine Providence, for the dispensation which, depriving me of my desired visit to England, prevented the renewal of an acquaintance which might peril thy peace, if not also that of this noble

but unfortunate lady !”—The knight stood for a few moments silent,—it might be conscience-stricken,—before his monitor ; then resuming his seat, said with an accent which, if melancholy, was at least calm: “ From thee, father, to whom every feeling of my heart is known, I will not conceal that the sweet intelligence, and surpassing beauty, and innumerable graces of this Castilian maid, had, ere I dreamed of danger, bound every finer sentiment of my soul in willing homage to one so fair. Yet do I not forget my bondage,—and could I but know that the gentle Inez was safe under the protection of the queen, I would never ask to see her more ! Thou art her grace’s almoner,—thy word can procure for the innocent girl a refuge in the palace, where her gaunt foe (whose designs are seldom baffled, as thou well knowest) will not dare to harm her. Promise me you will do this, and I give up my quest.”

“ Alas ! my son !—I made no inquiry respecting their dwelling,—and they were all unknown to me !”

“Then cease I not my search until she is found ! Adieu, father ! when we next meet, I trust I shall have discovered the exiles : a thousand thanks for the hopes with which you have inspired me,—they are in the city, that news hath given me new life ! Adieu !”

And enveloping his stately form in the wide capote, the impetuous youth hastily disappeared.

CHAPTER XV.

SHYLOCK.

"I'll have my bond ; I will not hear thee speak ;
I'll have my bond ; and therefore speak no more.
I'll not be made a soft and dull-eyed fool,
To shake the head, relent, and sigh, and yield
To Christian intercessors. Follow me not ;
I'll have no speaking ; I will have my bond."

Merchant of Venice.

ONE morning, as Inez returned from church, attended only by Laura,—for she persisted in declining the services of Sanchiza, and Donna Maria was detained at home,—she varied her usual route a little, at the suggestion of the aged maiden, in order to obtain a fine view of the river. The pleasure bestowed by the splendid prospect was, however, blended with regretful thoughts, for she remembered that the very waters which glistened so brightly in the morn-

ing light, had rolled beneath the walls of her paternal home.

As she turned from the spot, she perceived a heavy and gloomy building, destitute of door or windows; in the centre of which, nearly on a level with the street, was a wide grated opening. Through the bars she descried a multitude of faces, mostly pallid and emaciated, but chiefly wearing a reckless and ruffianly expression that deprived them of the pity their rueful appearance would otherwise have obtained. "Who are those miserable beings?" asked the lady of her attendant, when they had passed the spot.

"They are poor debtors, señora."

"There is in their looks less of the dejection of misfortune, than the ferocity of lawless minds."

"Oh, señora, few, save irreclaimable spend-thrifts, ever remain there long; had they any grace left, their friends, or the charitable, would soon rescue them from the common jail. But I saw there, a few days ago, one of far different

stamp from the wretches who throng the grating now. He appeared overwhelmed with distress, for his coarse companions were reviling him for being over-nice, and were forcing him, contrary to his wish, into a seat near the grating. I learned from the by-standers, that he was of gentle birth, but by his prodigality had wasted his patrimony. Poor wretch ! I offered up a prayer for him, for I could not but think he was repentant of his follies."

Inez shuddered, and quickened her steps, as though the vicinage of so dreadful an abode chilled her young veins. She soon reached her humble home, and found her father unusually gay, there was even exultation in the smile with which he folded her to his bosom. Delighted to behold his cheerfulness, Inez wasted not a moment on its cause, but catching from him a similar tone of mind, strove to prolong it by engaging him in animated converse. But his abstracted air soon convinced one by whom every expression of his countenance was so

habitually studied, that some engrossing thought occupied his mind. At length, after a long fit of musing, during which she had, unobserved, watched him with anxious solicitude, he, with an apparent effort, addressed her: "My child," he said, "I would fain converse with thee on a subject which may relieve us of all our cares :—come sit beside me." Inez obeyed, and folding her arm in his, looked up in his face with earnest expectation. "I have that to impart to thee, my love, which opens a prospect of rescuing thee from the obscurity and poverty in which thou art buried by my misfortunes."

"Have I ever repined, my father?" she softly murmured."

"Ah, there are other reproaches than those of words, or looks,—thy loveliness, thy talents, every grace and sweetness that mingles pride with my love of my matchless child,—nay even thy resigned cheerfulness, all reproach me that thou art torn from the sphere thou wouldst have adorned so well!"

"Oh, harbour not such thoughts, my beloved father; surely the lot to which Providence appoints us is the one for which we are best fitted; and what better fate could I desire than to be the comfort of thy declining years?"

"But, Inez, I have that to propose to thee, which will restore thee to thy rightful rank, without depriving me of thy affectionate attentions."

"Restore to me my rank?" cried the astonished maiden; "and, I pray thee, by what means?"

"Even by an honourable and suitable alliance." —Inez looked at him with silent surprise.—"By marriage, my beloved child;—dost thou not comprehend me?"

"No, indeed, my father."

"Thou perhaps deemest it improbable, that one, thy equal in rank, would in this strange land be found, (our necessities being so evident,) to wish to treat with me for thy hand?"

"Such are indeed my simple thoughts," replied Inez, whose cheeks grew paler at each sentence her father uttered.

"Know, then, that this very morning, a gallant and powerful noble, having by some chance heard of my arrival hither, called to welcome me to his native land; and ere departing, renewed a proposal made some two years ago for thy hand."

"His name, dearest father?—I beseech thee tell me his name!" Inez faintly said.

"Nay, thou wilt doubtless remember him—'tis the noble Count d'Ercillia.—But thou art ill, my child—that convulsive shudder."

"Inez strove to speak, but in vain,—a cold pang shot to her heart, as that hated name was breathed by lips so dear, and she bowed her fair head on her arm, to conceal the terror and dismay that had overspread her features with a deathly paleness.

But the fond father would not be so answered. Raising her drooping head, he imprinted a kiss

on her cold forehead, saying, "What dost thou fear, my Inez? Thinkest thou I would require more of thee now, than I did when he last sought thy love? I constrained not then my child's affections, nor will I influence her decision now." She made him no reply, and he continued in more measured tones. "But I would have thee remember, my child, how few would renew in our poverty, vows that were breathed when wealth and honours surrounded thee. Think—I implore thee—think ere rashly deciding, how devoted must be that affection which prefers thee, all dowerless as thou art, to the wealthy and influential Lusian dames who adorn the court of Alphonso. Nor in thy deliberations quite forget the joy, the pride, with which thy father would behold the sorrows and degradations of his hapless fortune amended by one act of his duteous child. Believe me, I made the generous noble acquainted with my exact position; and his reply was, that he possessed wealth sufficient to content the most unbounded desires. He pro-

posed to secure to thee a princely dower, and to myself,—but that signifies little, since my sojourn here can be but short,—yet 'twill serve to reveal to thee the nobleness of his nature ;—to me, then, he offers a choice of his palaces, and a yearly allowance amply sufficient for its due maintenance. Could a prince, Inez, make more munificent proffers ?”

“ And what answer gavest thou, my father ?” asked Inez, in low and tremulous tones.

“ What *could* I say ? surely only what I said erewhile.—I bade him take from thee mine answer.”

“ And I, my father, beseech thee to give him mine,—for the presence of this *most generous suitor* is beyond my endurance. Tell him, that no tempting promises, no cunning artifices, no spurious blandishments, no threats, no danger shall ever prevail over my unalterable resolve. Welcome poverty, welcome labour, welcome death !—if such should ever be the alternative to the acceptance of his vows,—for

immeasurably more abhorrent to me than either, or all of these, is the fate to which thou wouldst direct me. I beseech thee, good my lord, give him this my answer,—and, as thou lovest thy poor Inez, suffer me, if ever he approach thee when I am here, to withdraw unmolested to my chamber.”

“As thou wilt, my child,” said the knight, with deep chagrin of voice and look. “I perceive thy dislike is immovable; yet I cannot but marvel that one so affectionate and gentle should be capable of harbouring against this Lusian noble a displeasure so stern, that the mere mention of his name hath power to shake thy whole frame, and overspread thy countenance with the hues of death! But, from whatever cause so powerful a dislike hath taken possession of thy heart, such symptoms suffice to convince me that all remonstrance would be in vain.”

“Dearest father,” exclaimed the grateful daughter, sinking on his bosom,—“ever most indulgent! and, oh believe me, most dearly

loved !—suffer me but to share thy destiny, and minister to thy comfort, and I ask no better fate !”

The ready acquiescence of her father, evidently granted at the expense of many a bright fabric of glowing hopes, whilst it overwhelmed the heart of Inez with grateful emotion, calmed all her fears. She wondered, however, at the extreme audacity which had enabled Caelho to confront her father, and renew his suit, after the scene in which she had last beheld him ; but drew from the circumstance the cheering conviction, that he had found it impossible to compass his ends in any other way, now that they were safe in Lisbon. Content therefore to believe herself safe from his violence, and after her father's assurance little heeding his importunity, the overture of Caelho only served to recall his villainy, and contrast it with the generosity of the noble stranger who had circumvented it. The latter subject once admitted into that youthful mind, usually engrossed it

wholly; and though an impatient uneasiness had begun to mingle with her wish to unravel the mystery which surrounded her champion, there was yet so much to admire and revere in the little she knew, that her thoughts partook far more of delight than of sadness.

Don Sebastian was striving to forget his new disappointment in the pages of his mute counselor, and the lady was seated silent and abstracted beside him, when a visitor was announced.

Inez instantly recognised the slight and stooping figure whom she had some days before seen Perez conduct from the house; and beheld with surprise his sharp and withered countenance, which his keen glance alone redeemed from such icy calmness as dwells in the features of the dead. When, with an abject and cringing attitude, he approached Don Sebastian, and made his servile obeisance, the knight started, and whispered Donna Inez to retire, as the stranger wished to have a private conference with him. She instantly arose, for though surprised at a

command quite inexplicable now that her father's circumscribed affairs were entirely familiar to her, she hesitated not a moment to obey him. Retiring to the recess of the deeply embayed window, which, the heavy curtains being partly drawn before it, was almost as a separate apartment; she seated herself in the spot farthest from her father, and there no echo reached her of the faint murmur with which the stranger opened his mission.

For some time Don Sebastian and his visitor conversed in low tones, and Inez resting her fair brow beside the open casement, watched the few fleecy clouds, that, light as gossamer, reposed in the deep blue sky. On a sudden, however, she was startled by the unusually loud and angry voice of her father, to which the other's reply was made in his former monotonous and feeble accent. The knight's voice grew yet more violent and agitated, and his daughter with terrified looks rushed to his side.

"What hath chanced, O my father, to move thee thus?" she eagerly asked.

"O Inez, I forgot thou wert so near," he replied, with an attempt at composure; "'tis nothing, my child,—nothing. Content thee, love, and retire once more."

"Forgive me, dearest father,—but indeed I cannot leave thee thus!"

"Then do *thou* begone!" he said, addressing Joas with some return of his former passion. "Away, I tell thee!—speak not a word."

"Surely, señor," replied the Jew, with the most abject submission, "I am in great extremity,—he to whom I am indebted urgeth me sore. It is impossible but thou must have many friends who would be lavish of aid, wouldst thou but stoop to ask it; and, as I said before, if thou wilt persist in refusing to do so, the law must enable me to conquer thy obstinacy."

The knight had vainly attempted to arrest, or drown with his angry voice the usurer's words, but amidst his thundering objurgations, the cold, calm, hissing tones of the Jew came to the ear of Inez with fearful distinctness. "Begone!"

he vociferated, when the Jew at length paused, —“this instant depart, or by heaven! thou shalt rue thy taunting insolence.”

The knight started from his chair as he spoke, and the money-lender, not caring to brave longer his indignation, hastily quitted the room.

“What means this?” exclaimed Inez,—“how could so wretched and abject a being have power to move thee thus?”

The knight sunk on his chair without making her any reply, and pressing with his hands his burning brow, he relapsed into a reverie which Inez feared to disturb. At length uncovering his face, he gazed on his child as she knelt beside him, with her inquiring eyes fixed on his hueless countenance. His lips moved as though he would have spoken, but no words escaped them.

“This is dreadful!” murmured the shuddering girl, then raising her voice,—“Dearest father! if my sudden return hath so disturbed thee, I will withdraw.”

"Ah, no, my child," he replied, with laboured utterance,—“deprive me not *yet* of thy beloved presence.”

“Nor will I ever, mine own dearest father ! no power save thine own commands can separate me from thee.”

“But if some stern and unavoidable fate should sunder us ? Oh, Inez, thou refusest a husband's protection,—what would become of thee if deprived of mine ?”

“Alas, my father, wherein have I displeased thee, that thou shouldst pain me thus ?”

“Ah, spare me, merciful Providence !” ejaculated Don Sebastian wildly,—“she has no resource if I am taken from her.”

“There is ever the safe and happy refuge of a convent, dearest father ; but why—”

“Ah yes,—ah yes !” interrupted the knight. “Heaven bless thee, my child !—thou hast ever some word of comfort for thy wretched father, even when misery bows him lowest !”

“Doth then some new sorrow afflict thee now ?

if so, why not share it with me? doubttest thou my prudence; or my patient endurance? Oh, speak! perhaps I may suggest somewhat to avert or disarm it."

"Alas! thy feeble aid, and even thy love can avail me nothing now!" replied the unhappy parent, despondently. "But the struggle cannot last much longer, I feel that this morning's work hath lessened my hold of this miserable world! Ah, could I only be assured that thou hast a safe refuge from its dangers, I would welcome the hour that frees me from it for ever!"

Ere the disturbed lady could reply, the door of the room opened, and as the curtain which hung before it was in the act of rising, a sharp sound, like the ringing of a sword against the door-posts, caught the ear of the knight.—"They come!" he whispered. "O for strength to firmly bear this fearful trial!" He clasped his daughter to his bosom, but in another moment his eye fell upon the form that emerged from behind the drapery, and a glance of hopeful surprise lit up

his sunken features. It was but one individual who entered, but the sight of an armed host would not have wrought more dismay to the heart of Inez. Attired with sumptuous magnificence, and glittering with jewels, art had done its utmost to render Caelho irresistible in the eyes of the sex supposed to be chiefly influenced by appearances; and the whole strength of his powerful mind had been summoned to clothe his countenance in the blandest smiles, and soften the fierceness of his crafty eyes.

Inez uttered not a word, but clung to her father, and totally overpowered by surprise and fear, buried her face in his bosom.

The count sunk on one knee before them;—but Don Sebastian finding his endeavours to unclasp his daughter were vainly made, besought his noble guest to arise.

“Is not my fate in thy hand?” murmured the treacherous villain, softening his harsh accents as much as might be.

The father looked at Inez, but her pale averted face wore no expression save terror and disgust ; and gently leading her to the door, he whispered—" Seek thy chamber, my beloved child,—and strive to conquer these groundless terrors."

" Promise me, O my father, promise me thou wilt pledge thyself to nothing that may fetter my free choice."

" I have promised thee—it is enough." And Inez, trembling and pale, sought the sanctuary of her chamber.

Long did Don Sebastian confer with his wily guest, while the fair subject of their conversation paced her chamber, agitated and tearful. But the more she endeavoured to comprehend the events of the morning, the more did they bewilder her ; for the persevering importunity of Caelho was as incomprehensible as the mysterious power which the mean-looking stranger appeared to exercise over her father. She was not to be imposed upon by the specious promises or

hollow professions with which the count blinded her father, their last interview had too completely divested him of his mask for it ever to avail him again with Donna Inez; but what other powerful motive could induce him thus to urge so disadvantageous an alliance, she strove in vain to conjecture.

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CHAPTER I.

Imogen. ——— I am most sorry, sir,
You put me to forget a lady's manners ;
But I, which know my heart, do here pronounce
By the very truth of it, I care not for you !

Cymbeline.

Bethlen. Ruffian forbear ! Turn, turn and front my sword !

Emerick. Pish, who is this ?

Sarolta. O sleepless eye of Heaven ! A blest, a blessed
spirit !

Coleridge.

DONNA INEZ was yet bewildered with perplexing thoughts, when Sanchiza entering her bower, announced that Don Sebastian requested her presence. "Then *he* is gone," she murmured ; and anxious for a solution of some of her doubts, she hastened to obey the summons.

With extreme surprise, however, not unmixed with fear, she found the count still beside her father. He advanced to meet her, and would have led her with officious gallantry to her seat, but she declined the proffered

courtesy, and passing him without even a glance of recognition, took her accustomed place near Don Sebastian, and in silence awaited his commands. The voice that after a pause of irresolution fell on the lady's ear, was tremulous,—its articulation rapid,—and the eyes of her father regarded her with a solicitude which was painful to be seen, as, drawing her slight form closer to his side, he addressed her: “I have informed the Count d'Ercilia, my child, that the alliance he proposes does not meet thy approval;—but having extorted from me an admission that I am not averse to it, he with the pertinacity of a lover, urges his right to receive a denial from thy lips alone. Now, though (mindful of my promise) I will not assert my right to control thy decision, Inez, yet am I bound to warn thee, lest by causeless caprice thou plunge thyself and me into irremediable woe.”

“The sufferings of this world cannot be irremediable, my father,” replied Donna Inez, as struck with the solemn tones in which she was

addressed, she considered whether the unknown terror that had so shaken him at an earlier hour, might not be in some way dependent on her decision. For the first time she regarded the count, but with so stern and penetrating a glance that the villain's eyes fell beneath it; then turning to Don Sebastian, she asked,—
“What new peril menaces thee, dearest father? —yester e'en we parted in peace and happiness!”

“Ask not of me a word of explanation whilst this worthy knight awaits thy decision.”

“Surely he must be already satisfied on this unwelcome subject,”—and the glance with which the lady now regarded her suitor was expressive only of the scorn she with difficulty avoided giving utterance to.

Caelho's lips grew white, as he too plainly beheld the contempt with which he was regarded, but he in a subdued voice replied: “If Donna Inez would grant me a few moments private conference, perhaps I might be able to weaken her cruel resolve.”

An indignant refusal rushed to the lips of Inez,—but fear lest her father should learn too much, checked the hasty impulse, and gave her time to reflect, that if any danger really menaced him, it was only to be discovered by her mastering for a few moments her abhorrence of the traitor. With an air, therefore, of calm resolve, which might have quenched for ever the hopes of an ordinary lover, she moved towards the window, observing,—“ In this recess, señor, thou mayest speak unheard save by the *favoured* individual for whom thy confidence is reserved. 'Tis needless,” she continued, as the knight presented her a chair,—“ our conference, sir count, can be but brief.”

Again the chafed spirit of Caelho well-nigh threw off its mask, but a profound obeisance concealed his agitation, and with a calm voice he replied,—“ Fairest Inez, I implore thy patient attention, whilst I express my regret for having suffered an all-absorbing passion to overpower my judgment. Canst thou forgive the pain I then occasioned thee when——”

"Rise, señor," the lady cried, for he had sunk on one knee before her,—“retain that posture another moment, and I am gone !”

“Alas !” replied the knight as he arose, “what can be too deep humiliation for one who has so grievously offended her on whom his very existence hangs? Yet surely that rudeness I deplore might be more justly attributed to thee, lady ;—yes, to thy unrivalled charms,—to thy surpassing excellence,—which hath lit up in this heart a flame I can neither control nor subdue. Alas ! can one so gentle, so beautiful, be inexorable ?”

“If my forgiveness can avail to restore thy peace, accept it, señor, on the condition that thou never more renew thy suit. But let not this grace flatter thee into believing that I can ever be induced to entrust with the control of my future life, one who could suffer a selfish passion to hurry him into forgetfulness of charity, justice, and honour.”

“Is it then the nature of exalted virtue, to

despise those who yet struggle with their fallen nature? Surely it were an undertaking worthy of thy lofty mind, to reform what is amiss in me! Accept my love, noblest Inez, and mould me to the standard of thine own excellence!"

"Forbear, señor, to urge me further. Myself weak and erring, I assume not any right but that of freely deciding on the disposal of mine own hand. Remember, ere the harsh unkindness now so odious to thee was committed, I decided—aye in Castile—that thou wert not suited to make me happy!"

"Alas!" sighed the count, with an air of well-feigned despondency, "are then the hopes with which I have hitherto averted the phrenzy of disappointment, delusive all? I thank thee at least, señora, that thy words are not to be mistaken, although they totally frustrate my earnest wishes to save Don Sebastian from a grievous and impending danger. Yes, I had trusted that this interview would give me a right

to interfere betwixt him and destruction!—but—art thou not insensible to my sufferings!—aye, and unwilling, doubtless, that I should endeavour to avert those so closely threatening thee!”

He turned to quit the lady's presence, but she, alarmed by his dark hints, exclaimed—and the tremulous eagerness of her voice formed a marked contrast to her former cold and measured tones,—“Stay, señor,—what of my father? knowest thou of aught that threatens his peace?”

Caelho paused, and she regarded him with a look of searching scrutiny,—nor unmarked was the strange gleam, that, as he once more stood before her, flashed from his fierce eye. His voice, however, was unchanged, as he replied: “Rightly hast thou divined my fears, señora,—and perhaps mayest possess a clue to that which is to me a mystery, for only by accident have I become aware of the danger that this very hour must reach thy unhappy sire.”

“ Danger !—this hour !—I pray thee explain !

“ My appointed visit hither, señora, ought not to have preceded noontide,—but as I strove to consume the weary hours of suspense in strolling through the various paths of the city, I chanced on a sudden to hear thy father's name. Need I say, that word is a spell ever recalling to my mind her who rules its every thought ! I hastily turned to ascertain whence the sound arose.—Alas ! I may not torture thee with a picture of the scene I beheld !—I was beside the debtor's prison, señora, whence a party of alguazils were just issuing ; and I learned, in answer to my inquiries, that they were coming hither,—aye to this very dwelling ;—nay, more, that a creditor of Don Sebastian's was leading them, whose object was to convey the hapless noble to that horrid jail ! ”

The knight paused, but perceived in the expressive countenance of his auditress no emotion save a languid smile of incredulity.

“ Is that all ? ” she calmly asked.

"Save *this*, señora,—I purchased with a heavy bribe a respite for one hour, and ventured to anticipate my promised visit, in the hope of saving the father of her I love from the fate that threatens him."

Inez left the window, and advancing towards her father, exclaimed,—“ This gallant knight is more heedful of thy welfare than we had dreamed, señor ;—he hath discovered some debt to us unknown, which threatens thy liberty, and would fain—” She had not yet reached the chair of Don Sebastian, but his pale, agitated countenance arrested her words ; suddenly pausing, she clasped her hands, and in a tone of breathless eagerness, exclaimed,—“ ’Tis a false tale !—I know ’tis utterly untrue,—a mere fiction cunningly invented to practise on my love for thee ; yet speak, my father,—oh say that it is false !”

“ Alas ! my child, avert from me those reproachful eyes !”

“ Wilt thou not tell me I have nought to fear ?”

"That accursed usurer,—I understand him now! Didst thou not behold him here this very morn! Oh that I could say 'tis false!"

The old knight buried his face in his hands, and the stricken girl sunk speechless on his bosom.

The next moment, heavy footsteps were heard in the anteroom; the drapery over the door was raised, and Joas entered, attended by two alguazils. The former pointed to Don Sebastian, who in speechless agony clasped in his arms his weeping child, and gazed on unmoved whilst the men approached him. But Inez heard their advancing steps, and raising her head, exclaimed, "Stand back,—oh, harm him not! he hath been guilty of no crime,—and the demand ye make shall be met ere long."

"Yes!" cried Caelho, advancing,—“I will be his friend—if,” he added in low tones,—“I rightly interpret thy words, señora.”

"*Thou?*" answered Inez, with as much sternness as her gentle nature was capable of

assuming,—“*thou* the friend of Inez or her sire?—rather would I believe thee the hidden fire that hath caused this mine to spring beneath our place of refuge! Well mayest thou quail beneath my glance, thou disloyal knight!—but be assured, that even in this hour of agony, Inez yields not to thy temptations, nor hesitates for a moment between the cruel fate she must share with her revered parent, and the vile perjury of vowing to love and honour a thing like thee!”

D'Ercilia stalked towards Don Sebastian,—his face flushed, and the mask well-nigh removed from voice and visage. “Canst thou expect me, señor,” he hoarsely cried, “to offer thee aid, after hearing the insults of this frantic girl?”

“Inez, thou wilt break my heart,” the old knight feebly said,—“but an’ thou wilt not save me, let me at least in peace depart.”

Whilst yet speaking, he made an ineffec-

tual attempt to rise, and Inez remembering the horrid scene Laura had pointed out to her in the morning, sunk on her knees beside him, and replied only with her tears.

The unwonted tones with which Donna Inez had addressed her merciless foe, chanced to reach Sanchiza, who waited in the ante-chamber, and she with slow and timid steps now ventured within the room. The scene she witnessed filled her with terror, and stealing to her young mistress, she whispered,—“Suffer me to attend thee to thy chamber, señora,—this place is surely unmeet for thee.”

“Do thou hasten thither,” replied Inez, rising, “and bring what is needful for my attending my father into the city.”

“Yes,” muttered Joas, in his usual cold and feeble tones, “we can wait no longer, already have ye drawn largely on our patience.”

“For the love of the Virgin, tell me what

this means, dearest lady? My lord is motionless and pale as death,—how can he quit his dwelling?"

"'Tis for the lack of gold, girl,—hence and do my bidding. Even in a prison my place is beside him still!"

"A prison!—a prison for my lord,—and in his hour of sickness!"

"Alas, my helpless poverty!" groaned Inez. "Thou unnervest me, Sanchiza,—hence, hence, I will not leave him an instant with these men,—and thou seest they are impatient."

"Well," replied Sanchiza, "I am, it is true, but a simple bower-maiden, yet rather than my lord should be dragged to a jail I would scorn to hoard countless wealth in the shape of a useless bugle, even though the knight—"

"Ha!" interrupted Inez, "thou givest me new life!—go, bring it hither immediately; perhaps this man—yet no—never shall his hands pollute the precious gift! Bid Perez

speed to a dealer in jewels, and obtain for it the utmost sum the merchant will grant. Oh, fly, and I may yet save my father!"

Sanchiza disappeared, and Donna Inez breathed words of hope into her father's ear, as (after having assured Joas that his claim should be satisfied) she stood with a throbbing heart beside him.

The payment of the gold, and consequent deliverance of Don Sebastian, were however far from desired by the usurer.

Urged by a sign from the master-villain, he insisted on no further delay. In vain did Inez implore for a little time, the Jew's impatience grew violent, and whilst the lady endeavoured to expostulate with him, the count whispered to Don Sebastian,—“Surely thou wilt not suffer thy beauteous daughter, though headstrong, to horde with felons! With thy permission, I will undertake to protect her until thy release is procured, which, if I have influence in the state, shall be ere long.”

But the aged noble heard him not,—his brain was confused—his heart well-nigh broken. A ghastly pallor had overspread his features, and his voice was faint and tremulous, as arising from his chair he murmured,—“I am ready to accompany ye, señors,—lead on. One hope still remains, of which ye cannot despoil me;—one hope, and that nearly realized. Yes!—no prison, however strong, will detain me long! But, Inez, since thou wouldst not conquer one unfortunate prejudice for my sake: at least believe, that to follow me hence would be utter madness, and avail me nothing. Alone, unadvised, I contracted this debt, and alone will I endure its consequences! Señors, I am ready to accompany ye,—but, I beseech ye, of your charity grant me the aid of some well-nerved arm, for my limbs, like all other earthly things, fail me in my extreme need! Nay, cling not thus, my Inez, we must part.”

“But I have sent for aid—oh stay one moment longer!”

.

"Alas ! my child, what shall we gain by delay ? Thou knowest we are utter strangers in this unfriendly city."

Urged by a signal from his superior, the Jew commanded the alguazils to seize their prisoner. They approached, and Caelho himself strove to unclasp the clinging arms of the unhappy child.

"Suffer me at least to accompany him," she cried ; "indifferent to me is your prison,—but oh, part us not !"

"It is in vain to wrestle with our fate," said Don Sebastian ;—"one kiss, my beloved child ! Heaven only knows if we may ever meet again !"

He pushed aside the count (who, fearful lest aid should indeed arrive, would have hastened their parting,) and pressing his lips to the pale brow that rested on his bosom, strained her again and again to his aching heart, whilst the tears that stole down his venerable cheeks glistened among her dishevelled tresses.

He was yet bending over that sylph-like form, so graceful even in its attitude of sorrow, and breathlessly murmuring blessings, as if he felt that their parting was to be eternal,—when a quick and ringing footstep approached the apartment; the door was abruptly opened—the curtain flung violently aside,—and holding in his hand the jewelled bugle, the stately form of the black knight stood before the astonished group.

This most unexpected apparition affected powerfully, though with far different emotions, every individual there assembled. The Jew and his myrmidons drew nigh the portal; Caelho absolutely staggered on perceiving his victorious foe, but in an instant recovering himself, he gnashed his teeth with rage and disappointment. From the lips of Donna Inez burst a cry of surprise and joy,—and blushes suffused her blanched cheeks, as raising her head from her father's breast, she murmured,—“ 'Tis our guardian angel, and no mortal !”

The knight was clad as when they first beheld him, save that a wide capote fell from his shoulders, as he paused to scan the scene before him. "Ha! caitiff!" he exclaimed, addressing the Jew—"Give me thy bond!" The usurer obeyed. "Now begone!" He pointed towards the door, and the wretch seemed to shrink to one half his usual size as he slunk thereto, and disappeared with his followers. "Be seated, señor," the stranger continued, in calmer tones addressing Don Sebastian; "and thou, fairest lady, be calm,—thy trials are all past!" Then passing on to d'Ercilia, he drew his form to its full height, and having regarded him for a moment in silence, with a loud and stern voice exclaimed: "Thou base knight! thou stain of chivalry! have I again detected thee plotting against the peace of this noble lady? Could I stoop to take the fairest page from thy code of honour, I should this instant put thee to the defence of thy un-knightly and fraudulent deeds. But thou art unarmed, and for the present safe. Begone! but

take with thee this warning,—Dare to disturb again, but by a breath, the repose of this maiden, or her sire,—*and beware thy gilded spurs!*”

Caelho, though supported by his indomitable pride, quailed beneath the commanding superiority of his foe, whose gestures, and voice, and stately form were instinct with the majestic thoughts that prompt to noblest deeds. Yet did he endeavour to conceal his consciousness of guilt, and with an insolent and haughty voice replied—“And who art thou, sir knight-errant!—and why is thy ever-ready cunning so interested in watching my movements? But thy confidence is no more worth soliciting than thy disguise is able to conceal thee from my knowledge. Aye, start, grave masquer! for he assured I know more of thee than thou wouldst care to have suspected. But thou hadst best return to thy Castilian plains, for we brook not foreign vipers here.”

“I would at least warn this viper I have found in Portugal, that, an’ he take not better

heed, I may perhaps, ere returning to those plains thou spakest of, despoil him of his fangs!—But thy breath pollutes this presence—attempt not further parley!”

The voice and commanding gesture of the stranger were so imperative as to brook no further delay; the count was fain to retreat, and as he hastily enveloped himself in his capote, cast on Inez such a look of fiendish malice as sent the life-blood rushing to her heart. But the next moment the pure stream banished the paleness that had clothed her cheeks,—for her champion, her preserver, and the hero of her day-dreams was at her feet.

“’Tis far more fitting,” exclaimed Don Sebastian, “that we should kneel to thee, sir knight,—I pray thee quit that lowly posture.” On hearing his voice the stranger started, hastily arose, and stood beside him. “Señor,” resumed Don Sebastian, “may we not know to whom we are indebted for such repeated acts of friendship? My Inez calls thee her guardian angel,—would we knew thine earthly name!”

“Blest appellation,” replied the stranger, whose voice once more breathed the soft low melody which Inez best recognised :—“continue so to call me, fairest lady—though unworthy. Thy guardian I *will* be until the malice of thy foe be wearied out, or vengeance extinguish it ; —thy *angel* guardian !—for such homage alone as a spirit might award to a superior intelligence, doth my hapless fate permit me to render thee.”

The trembling lips of Inez were incapable of a reply, and in as few words as possible the knight proceeded to explain the unexpected cause which had rendered his letter so useless to Don Sebastian ; adding, that as the abbade de San José was not, as he had supposed, in England, he would find in him a wise and ready friend.”

“But explain, I beseech thee,” said Don Sebastian,—“to what blest chance are we indebted for thy arrival now, when heaven and earth seemed to have deserted me ?”

"E'en by means of this bugle," the knight replied. "I perceived it in the hand of Perez, as he ran down an adjacent *rúa*, and learned from the good squire somewhat of thy danger as he led me hither. I bless God that my arrival was so timely, señor,—but my mission is past—I must bid thee farewell. Only when Donna Inez needs my aid may I venture to approach her! May fear and sorrow, fairest lady, be henceforth far from thee!"

"Canst thou not utter one word, Inez?" said Don Sebastian, to whom her speechless agitation was inexplicable.

"Better not,—far better not!" replied the knight; "the music of that voice would but endanger my weak resolves. Kindly dost thou spare me, lady,—for the air thou breathest is perilous to my soul! Adieu!"

And with an emotion of voice and manner which overcame the good old knight with amazement, the unknown abruptly withdrew.

CHAPTER II.

"The sea of Fortune doth not ever flow.
She draws her favours to the lowest ebb;
Her tide hath equal time to come and go;
Her loom doth weave the fine and coarsest web;
No joy so great but runneth to an end,
No hap so hard but may in fine amend."

Southwell.

CONFLICTING were the thoughts that agitated the mind of Donna Inez after her champion had departed. Admiration, wonder, pity,—aye and self-reproach, each did their part to secure the empire in her bosom which had already begun to disturb her peace. Sometimes she wept over the sole glimpse he had permitted of himself—that bitter and blighting woe to which his sad words had again alluded; and with the trusting confidence of youth, never for a moment doubted, that, whatever its nature, it

was undeserved. Sometimes she with exultation recalled the contrast his dignified form and commanding words presented to the abject sense of inferiority which, in spite of his attempt at bluster, was displayed by the base-souled Caelho. Often she reproached herself for the weakness which had suffered him to depart without a single word of acknowledgment, and the presence of her father formed a perpetual memento of the generous being who had saved him from a doom that must have been fatal to his life or reason.

If such thoughts were preparing a weight of sorrow for future hours, they foreboded none ; for as Inez recalled every word and slightest gesture of her unknown friend, her soul (even when she wept) was steeped in bliss.

Evening now approached, and Don Sebastian (having vainly exhausted conjecture in the attempt to solve the mystery which shrouded the stranger) resumed his manuscript, and Inez stole to the embayed window, where without

interruption she could indulge her reveries. The silence that reigned in the antique room was at intervals broken by the creaking of the parchment as the knight occasionally turned over the leaves he was perusing, or by the hum of a lingering bee that now and then hovered over the blossoms in the balcony.

On a small stand near the window stood a silver cup, in which Inez had placed the bouquet which had as usual greeted her that morning as she left her bower ; and the sweet perfume of the fragrant orange flowers tempted sometimes a winged wanderer to risk the perilous adventure of entering the open casement. At such a moment the buzzing of his rapid wings sounded loudly in the quiet room, and quickly betrayed the intruder. But dear to Inez was the meanest thing formed by the Creative Hand, and unknown to her the unsympathising selfishness which grudges to give another even the portion of heaven's blessings which itself cannot enjoy. Not unfrequently she found a calm pleasure

in watching the rapid motions of the only free inhabitant of the air she ever now beheld, and amused herself with fancying in what flowery groves and fertile meadows he had collected the plunder that loaded his thighs ; but she was unconscious now of the intrusion, for her thoughts were busy in conjecture's boundless realm.

Yet when, as the evening dusk drew on, low voices were heard near the door, and its simply constructed latch was raised, she started from her reverie, and whispered, as with flushed countenance she gazed on the drapery that hung before the door,—“ He returns !—he comes again !”

“ Who comes ?” asked the knight, raising his eyes from the manuscript, and regarding her with surprise as he followed the direction of her glance. The voice of Sanchiza announced “The Abbade de San José”—and the next moment that venerable personage entered the room. Inez recognised in an instant the

purchaser of her orphrey, and sinking on her knee she received his blessing; but when she arose, the sudden flush of joy and expectation had faded from her brow, and the languor of disappointment had robbed her fine eyes of their lustre. The "religious" having been received with heartfelt reverence, delayed not long to acquaint the father and daughter of the object of his mission. "I have been made acquainted, señor," he said, "with the singular incidents which accompanied your journey from Castile, and have much deplored the disappointment occasioned (remotely) by my sudden illness, whereby the hospitality due to an illustrious stranger has been so long withheld. Now, however, I come to make as prompt and complete a reparation as possible for the seeming neglect, and am but too well pleased that I have been commissioned to announce to you the appointment of this noble lady as maid of honour to our virtuous and beloved queen." The knight (too much a courtier to exhibit the surprise

that filled him at this most unexpected information, yet unable quite to control his feelings,) simply bowed, and the abbade continued. "And lest the acceptance of an honour which renders an almost constant attendance in the palace indispensable, should interfere with the greatest of all duties, those of a child to its parent, Donna Beatrice hath been graciously pleased to request Don Sebastian's acceptance of an honourable but nominal office, which gives him also apartments near the sovereign.

A flutter of delight was at the old man's heart, but he calmly delivered such humble and duteous reply as the exalted station of his benefactress demanded; then with less formal and more earnest accents addressing the abbade, he said,—“Venerable father, if thou knowest aught of the gallant youth who hath delivered us from so many perils, I beseech thee remove the obscurity which surrounds him; nor dream that an idle curiosity alone prompts my request,—for I would fain know one who is an honour to chivalry.”

“O my father!” Inez timidly interposed—
“methinks ’twould be ungenerous to attempt
the discovery of a secret which he whom it
most concerns is so anxious to conceal.”

“True, true,” replied Don Sebastian,—“thou,
in truth, recallest my better resolves! Thy
discretion is worthy of thy noble nature, my
virtuous child! Reverend father, I withdraw
my rash request,—let the solution of the mys-
tery be left to him who hath doubtless wise
reasons for continuing it.”

The abbade, who had regarded the youthful
lady with a look of warm approval, answered :—
“Be assured, my friends, no ignoble motive oc-
casions the secrecy which must naturally be
surprising to you ; to attempt, however, to pene-
trate it, would be, believe me, unavailing. One
remark more will I venture to make,”—and he
regarded Inez with a glance so penetrating that
her eyes involuntarily sought the ground,—“so
circumstanced is that young stranger, that the
homage which another might find it his glory

to pay to female excellence would be in him a crime."

The heart of the good old man smote him when he saw the young girl's cheeks fade whilst he thus addressed her, and remarked, as her glance remained fixed on the ground, a slight tremor in her lips, and fringed eye-lids. Ah ! too well founded was his fear, that the words he had hoped would prove a timely caution had come all too late ! With a voice of gentlest feeling he again addressed the conscious maiden, whom he felt that he had wounded, though, he trusted, only to heal.--" Lady, thou art about to enter a scene all new and untried,—for believe me the ways of courts are not only intricate, but too often fraught with danger. Shouldst thou ever require a counsellor, confide in me." Ere Inez could arrange her thoughts for a moment, he continued : " It now only remains for me to present the first portion of the annual stipend attached to thy office;" and placing on the table a small silken bag, the good man bestowed his

blessing, and somewhat abruptly departed. Not so hastily, however, but that the knight attended him to the door of the antechamber, where Sanchiza waited ; and returning to his daughter, folded her for some moments in his arms.

“ No more danger !” he exclaimed, as soon as he had found utterance ; “ no more dread of the sordid wants that have so ‘ chafed my soul ! Thou returnest, my fair child ! to the sphere to which thy birth entitlest thee, and behold ! here are ample means to restore thy plundered wardrobe !”

He reversed the heavy purse, and amidst its golden contents appeared, to their great surprise, several costly jewels. “ ’Tis *his* gift !” said Inez, mournfully—“ Ah yes, ’tis *he* hath placed us in safety,—and now we shall behold him no more !” Tears that refused to be checked gushed from her eyes, and for some moments she wept unrestrainedly.

Don Sebastian beheld her emotion with astonishment. “ I never saw woman weep at sight of

jewels before !" he exclaimed ; "but no wonder, the surprises of this day have overpowered thee. A few hours since threatened with a loathsome prison—now maid of honour to a queen ! Good angels guard us ! The events of this day have been enough to bewilder the strongest mind ! Retire to thy bower, dearest ! by the time thou hast told thy beads, thou wilt have regained thy accustomed calmness. Yes" he continued, with something of the haughty demeanour of a Spanish noble,—“conquer this weakness, Inez ; for be assured 'tis not so very wonderful that one of *thy* house hath an appointment in a royal palace ! Stay—take with thee the gold and jewels, girl ; thou wilt need them all now.”—But Inez was gone.

Scarcely had the knight returned the valuables to the purse, when Sanchiza approached him. The faithful creature had just been dismissed by her lady, who, too occupied in her own musing to be mindful of the deep anxiety of her attendant, had declined her proffered services. “Alas,

señor," she faltered, "I see too plainly that in clinging so devotedly to my mistress, I but add to her sorrows! I will never more—no, not even by a sigh—influence her to keep me with her!" Tears checked further utterance, and Don Sebastian hastily replied:

"Nonsense, girl! nonsense,—thy lady cannot dispense with thy service? Did I not always say 'twas absurd to think of dismissing her sole attendant? Content thee—thy care now must be, not to have forgotten thy cunning as a tiring maiden, for thy mistress will need all thy skill."

Joy, surprise, wonder, for awhile rendered Sanchiza speechless,—and when she found voice, she far out-guessed the truth. "Ah yes," I see it all! that gay noble—the gallant knight—and the grave priest forsooth! Oh, I understand thee, señor,—my sweet lady is to be married! Heaven bless her! how beautiful she will look in her bridal robes!"

"Nay, thou outrunnest thy warrant, good

Sanchiza,—thy lady treateth the slightest hint of marriage with disdain. But thou hast no reason to blame her judgment, for thy life henceforth will be sufficiently gay, or I much mistake.”

“No matter whether my life be gay or gloomy, so I remain with my dear lady, señor. Ah, I ever loved her!—but not until she said I must leave her, did I know how dear she had become to her poor Sanchiza!”

CHAPTER III.

"The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Burnt on the water; the poop was beaten gold,
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
The winds were love-sick with them. The oars were silver,
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke and made
The water which they beat, to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes."

On wears the day—and the crowds that hurry
through Lisbon's narrow streets press rapidly
forward, regardless of the tempting wares ex-
posed for sale, or the reiterated cries of fruit-
bearers or water-carriers. Like beings having
some one absorbing aim from which they cannot
for an instant turn aside, they with impatient
steps keep hastening onward. Towards the
banks of the river tends the great mass of the
multitude, and the triple avenue of stately cork-

trees which adorns its margin, is in brief time densely thronged; the more agile and adventurous youth climbing the smooth and porous trunks, and fearlessly clinging to the gnarled branches, nor hesitating even to crowd on those which bend over the glittering waves.

Around the marble steps which form the principal landing place, and throughout the steep street extending thence to the very heart of the city, collected also a countless throng, whose countenances were beaming with animation and excitement. As the sudden impulses of a feverish expectation swayed the multitude, like the large billows of a living sea, it required all the activity and tact of the city authorities, with their municipal guards, (who mounted on the stout steeds of *Tras-os-Montes* lined the entire route which the coming pageant was expected to take,) to prevent the people from passing on the space reserved for the procession. For several hours the eager spectators had been collecting, and heedless of heat or in-

convenience, or the stern repulses of the steel-clad troopers, spent the time in jesting, or exchanging angry altercation, as the humour of the moment inclined to merriment or impatience. But not often did the scowl of defiance displace the joyous glance, for fretfulness and ill-humour are not denizens of those sunny shores, and the more violent passions were hushed by the universal anticipation of a day of festivity and joy. When, therefore, a loud and prolonged flourish of trumpets announced that the royal barges had left the palace, it was echoed by a deafening shout of welcome ; and as each individual pressed close to his neighbour, impatience was forgotten, and the love of fun suspended, in the eager desire to gratify the passion for pageants common to the multitude in every age.

And never was spectacle more worthy than the one now floating on the smooth waves of Lisbon's beautiful river, of the breathless admiration with which the citizens thronged to behold it. Galleys crowded with guards clad in

polished armour, and wearing gilded helmets, and minstrels whose triumphal strains awakened enthusiastic rapture in every bosom :—barges which in the elegant or grotesque splendour of their devices and ornaments vied with each other, and contained knights and ladies, nobles and statesmen, whose rich attire of silk and velvet, and gold and silver brocades and costly tissues, glittered with countless jewels, preceded or surrounded those of the royal household.

And first of these came one, the prow of which was shaped to the semblance of a swan in the act of adjusting with golden beak its ruffled bosom. Of pale blue silk were the tunics of the rowers, whose noiseless and uniform strokes propelled it slowly ; and the light canopy fringed with silver, and surmounted by a slight crown whence sprung the narrow banneret that indicated the barge of the Infant, was of the same hue. A graceful drapery descended thence, and partly screened the raised seats of the youthful prince and his consort, who, surrounded by the nobles of their

household, returned with many a courteous gesture the acclamations which rent the air when the people recognised their favourite. What heeded the crowd, that their noisy professions of attachment only tended to increase the bitter jealousy with which Alphonso regarded his only son ?

The barge of Don Pedro was followed by the galleys of his household, and his guard of honour, and after these appeared the cymbals and trumpets which preceded the sovereign. The stately prow of the king's barge displayed a majestic eagle hovering with outstretched wings and head upraised, as if its eyes (each a priceless brilliant) were defying the broad gaze of the sun. A canopy of crimson and gold, with its heavy drapery and regal crown, and floating banner, surmounted the royal couches ; and on a seat somewhat beneath them appeared the young princess Donna Maria. Every corner of the huge vessel was occupied,—there the noblest, wisest, loveliest of the age and nation had

assembled,—for then, as now, the right of breathing the air with royalty was guarded with jealous care.

Innumerable barges, in the formation of which fancy had run riot, followed : and in the shaping of their prows, and the fashion of their embellishments, no two assimilated. Dragons, griffins, mermaids,—beasts, birds, fishes,—every imaginary animal, and almost every created thing, found a similitude in the splendid aquatic spectacle. As it passed on, the various light boats, with their graceful lateen sails, which had appeared to contemplate the pageant at a respectful distance, closed in upon the line, bearing with them thousands of noisy throats that re-echoed the shouts of the multitude ashore. Over the marble steps of the principal landing place, an awning had been erected, which extended thence along the narrow street leading into the city, and terminated at a vast ornamented building, above which floated flags and banners, and banners of every shape and size. Slender pillars

enwreathed with flowers supported the silken screen, and with redoubled zeal the guard now protected the covered way from the rush of the multitude.

A simultaneous movement had taken place among the people,—the banks of the river were in great part deserted ; and though crowds still lingered beside the shaded path, the greater number rushed with headlong haste towards the spacious and heavy building towards which it tended. The various wide portals were assailed by the eager populace, and, with indescribable clamour and confusion, accompanied with screams, shouts, and struggles, which could not have been exceeded had an armed and hostile host been at their heels, the excited mass quickly disappeared within it. A few moments of comparative calm succeeded, as though the monster, gorged with so plenteous a meal, were disposing of itself for repose ; but the tumult was only transferred to its interior, where various animated struggles for the best seats in the free galleries not unfrequent-

ly required the interposition of the alguazils. The whole of the galleries (including that which being partly shaded by the position of the building from the sun's rays, was secured at a trifling cost by the better class of the citizens) were soon filled; and the more select spot reserved for those of gentle birth began to afford amusement to the multitude by the gradual assembling there of those distinguished by illustrious birth or lofty office. Every unconscious arrival was assailed by those, whose single impotence no less than their united strength rendered it impossible to appeal from their judgment, with such shrewd remarks, and caustic truisms, as (notwithstanding the general prejudice against flying rumours) generally mark the verdict of the public; whilst some, to whom the whole scene was a bewildering novelty, contented themselves with quietly regarding the strange and animated scene.

The cumbrous walls of the spacious building arose, without pretending to any advantage except massive strength, to a considerable

height, and enclosed an extensive area of semi-circular form. On all sides were erected, even to the summits of the massive walls, tiers of benches, whence flashed thousands of dark eyes ; and every countenance, whether calm, grave, or joyous, bore more or less the expression of impatient expectation which may be marked in a people assembled to witness their favourite diversion.

One portion of the raised galleries alone was still vacant, or nearly so,—it was where the silken awnings, and fringed canopies, and cushioned couches awaited the royal and noble visitors. And thither all eyes were turned, when suddenly the prolonged flourish of trumpets, followed by a distant shout, reached the multitude. “ They have entered the city ! ” — “ The king has landed ! ” “ They come ! ” — exclaimed innumerable voices,—and the breathing tapestry that lined the wide and lofty walls was agitated like the corn plains when the breeze sweeps over them. Another, and another

shout!—each clearer, louder, nearer,—and now the glorious Lusitanian chivalry appear, each taking his appointed place around the royal seat. Glittering armour, and knightly badge, and waving plume, and civic robe, rapidly assemble within the guarded precincts, and but by a few moments precede the royal party.

As Alphonso, followed by his august family, entered the amphitheatre, the populace arose, and with one continuous shout welcomed their sovereign. Stern and haughty was the gesture with which he returned their greeting; and as he advanced, a rapid glance enabled him to observe that his son was replying to the vociferous plaudits that hailed his entrance, with all the grace and dignity of youth. The royal brows contracted, and the lips on whose fiat hung a nation's destinies slightly quivered, as, leading his gentle queen to the chair of state, he took his place beside her. It was the signal for all present, save such as were in immediate attendance on the sovereigns, to be seated; the

Infant, with his consort and youthful sister, in front of their illustrious parents ; and the noble and distinguished personages who had accompanied the royal family, in groups around. The people also became more calm, and whilst they endeavoured to restore their strained throats to some degree of order, still scanned with curious eyes their haughty rulers.

In one of the lowest tiers in the shaded gallery, and but a few feet above the sanded area, one individual yet remained standing, and as he scarcely occupied more space than the pillar against which he leaned, those behind him suffered him to remain undisturbed. By the slight figure, the pale sunken cheeks, the flowing hair, and delicately formed features, it were easy to recognise Henriquez, the youthful alchemist. His dark melancholy eyes, as thus he stood with his arms folded in his wide capote, were raised towards the assembled court : but without being dazzled by the magnificence, or awed by the majesty there assembled,—for a

calm expression of rapt contemplation alone appeared on his countenance.

Beside him sat one, his perfect contrast in all but age. The bright, though slightly embrowned complexion, through which acquired tint the ruddy hue of health came and went with every varying emotion, and the blue, joyous eyes of the stranger, that wandered over the scene around him as though all was strange, new, and delightful, proved him no countryman of Henriquez. His level brows, and long eyelashes, and slight beard, were of the deepest shade of brown, and matched full well the short clasping curls, that escaping from beneath a small hunting cap of dark green velvet, clung round his ample brow and stag-like throat. Similar to the cap in material and colour was the tightly fitting tunic which displayed to advantage his broad chest and muscular arms; and though not yet arrived at the full proportions of manhood, it was evident that a frame so symmetrically moulded and firmly knit, must already possess no ordinary degree of power.

With delighted eyes he gazed around, sometimes on the bevy of fair dames who attended the queen, or the glittering assemblage of warriors and statesmen who stood beside their sovereign ; often a prolonged glance fell on the less brilliant ranks in the opposite gallery, where a brawl more animated than dignified occasionally enabled the motley groups assembled there to relieve the tedious moments of expectation, and won from the gazer a smile that displayed his white and firmly set teeth. And many a wistful look did he direct to the low portal whence the sports of the day were to begin ; nor he alone,—for, did glances, as poets feign, partake of the nature of sunny rays, or barbed darts, that iron-bound door had dissolved, or been so entirely perforated as to fall down in ruins,—since every eye which could be made to command it, was occasionally or constantly directed thither.

Suspense was at its height—expectation was becoming painful,—when suddenly the low door flew open, and forth issued a long array of

capinhas with their scarlet flags and scarfs and fantastic dresses. To these succeeded mounted picadors bearing each a barbed spear, who paraded around the area, and having paused with a low obeisance before the throne, took their appointed stations. With one exception, every individual devoured with eager eyes the scene of the expected encounter,—that one was Henriquez, who, unmoved by the shouts of the multitude, or the clangor of instruments, kept his eyes immovably fixed in the same direction, while they wore the same absorbed expression as before.

Again the portal was thrown aside, and with the cries of the populace mingled the hoarse bellow of a fierce bull that rushed furiously into the area, and but narrowly missed a hardy capinha who had thrown himself before him. A picador, who spurred his steed to the rescue, succeeded in slightly galling his neck with his spear; and though the animal turned upon him with surprising rapidity, the agile capinhas

fluttered their red flags before his eyes, he was diverted from his revenge, and they, slipping aside, escaped his fury. The attack was repeated again and again, until the animal in his paroxysm of baffled rage tore the ground with his hoof, sent the air in noisy gusts from his distended nostrils, and lashing his sides with his long bushy tail, stood fiercely gazing around him in the centre of the arena. The fearless capinhas continued however to dare him to the attack, suffering him to expend his fury on their scarlet flags; whilst the picadors aimed their darts at his thick neck, and trusted to the artifices of the capinlas for an escape from his vengeance. After the conflict had been for some time prolonged, one of the *homens de forca* entered the arena. He advanced into its centre, and there stood defying the animal with his extended arms. The challenge was quickly accepted,—they rushed towards each other, but the man missed his aim and was thrown to the

ground. The capinhas hastened to the rescue; some attracted to themselves the fury of the bull, who, proud of his exploit, chased them on all sides, whilst others bore the stunned champion from the ground. A young picador riding up, the bull received another dart, and the rider failing in his second attempt, wheeled his horse to escape the attack which was sure to follow; but unfortunately chose the same side that the bull had taken. The horse was struck with such violence that he fell, but the capinhas were instantly on the spot, and the steed had time to recover himself without dismounting his rider. The spectators expressed their approval by shouts and cries, and the dark eyes of the young picador flashed with joy as he replied with a graceful gesture to the plaudits of the people;—nor was his exultation unwarranted, for by retaining his seat so skilfully he had established himself a favourite.

Symptoms of exhaustion being now exhibited in the bull, who had afforded quite his share of amusement and danger, an experienced combatant, whose grizzled locks betokened age, though

his firm, sinewy limbs, and agile movements evinced no lack of vigour, advanced unarmed towards him, and standing alone in the centre of the arena, extended his arms. This was the crisis of the fight, and the intense interest with which the feat was viewed spread a deathlike silence among the assembled crowds. The bull rushed with all his remaining strength towards the challenger, who flinging himself between the animal's horns, grasped his broad neck, and notwithstanding his violent efforts to free himself clung securely there whilst he rushed round the arena. Thunders of applause greeted the daring exploit, and when the well-known forador was released by his companions, he walked around the arena, that the spectators might assure themselves he was unhurt; and as he bowed lowly in acknowledgment to their noisy applause, numerous small coins, the reward of his bravery, found their way into his goat-skin pouch. A general cry of "*Fora!*" "*Fora!*" followed, and the exhausted quadruped was easily overpowered and led from the ground.

A pause ensued,—the floor of the arena was levelled, and fresh sand strewed over it; and the spectators arose, and looked around them, or engaged in animated remarks on the combat.

Of all who were present at that exciting scene, not one entered into the spirit of it more fully than the youthful stranger, whose deep musical voice had more than once startled Henriquez de la Zibrieria by its loud and enthusiastic plaudits. Starting to his feet when the bull was led away, his stately height enabled him to watch unobstructed by the crowds near him, the disappearance of the bold brute and his captors; then turning to Henriquez, he was about to offer some remarks on the fight, but struck by the youth's unchanged attitude, he exclaimed—
“Can it be possible, señor, that thou hast been present at, without beholding, the favourite diversion of thy nation?”

“What are to me the cruelty and danger and agony of such a scene?” replied the soft low voice of the alchemist, as he regarded the

stranger for a moment :—" but if I heeded the chances of the fight, I have not failed to see them shadowed in the mirror whereon I gaze."

His eyes resumed their melancholy watch, and the stranger tracing more narrowly the direction of his glance, fancied that it was fixed on the spot where were assembled the royal family and their attendants.

" The mirror whereof thou speakest, gentle seor, must e'en be some lady's eyes,—for nought else save the broken flashes of knightly armour, and the cold glitter of jewels, is sparkling there." Henriquez sighed, but answered not, and the stranger continued : " This spot is well chosen for fixing on the memory the features and aspect of yon illustrious personages ; and to me, who am no dweller in this realm, it would be no unwelcome study, could I but meet with one who would give a name and interest to each unknown form."

" So far as my information may avail thee, señor, replied Henriquez, " thou art welcome

to it—but, with a few exceptions, it is confined to the characters almost universally known.”

The stranger with brief but hearty thanks hastened to avail himself of the proffered courtesy; “It is easy to recognise the stern-willed Alphonso, and his pale queen, whose meek smile hath in it something of remembered suffering. Don Pedro also—the noble prince so well known to chivalry—is too distinct a being from those who surround him, to be for a moment mistaken,—but who are the ladies who sit beside him?

“On his right hand you behold the Infanta—the young bride whom Castile has so recently given to his arms ;—on his left Donna Maria, his only sister,—the gentle, pious, and beloved.”

The stranger appeared dissatisfied, and commenced some hasty remarks, but checked himself, and after a pause continued—“The youthful princess is prepossessing, and hath a sweetly expressive countenance,—but I must

not lose time, therefore, if I weary thee not, tell me, who is he that stands beside the king, his small piercing eyes looking out from the swollen muscles around them, with restless activity, whilst his countenance wears a perpetual but heartless smile that might be summoned to cover dark thoughts !”

“Hush !” whispered Henriquez, “that is the Cemeire Mor—the Count d’ Ercilia ;—’tis said he hears every word that is breathed in the capital —Look not incredulous, but beware !—he hath ears in every crowd,—doubtless his spies are near us now !”

A contemptuous glance around him was the stranger’s sole reply ; and another bull being at that moment turned into the arena, the youth resumed his seat, for the shouts of the spectators prevented further conference.

The animal who had now entered the amphitheatre displayed less metal, and therefore caused less excitement than his predecessor, and the stranger found more amusement in noticing his

singular neighbour, than in watching the events of the arena. The closest scrutiny, however, could not detect that Henriquez took the slightest interest in the fight; and the young stranger, prompted by curiosity, determined to discover, if possible, which of the demure court beauties had so enslaved him. Following therefore the direction of his unmoved glance, he began to examine more closely the fair countenances of the maids of honour who attended the queen. Whilst thus occupied, the short combat terminated, the unresisting brute was led away, and one decorated with flowers and gay ribbons, which indicated his fate, rushed with a fierce bellow among his fearless foes. But the young stranger no longer heeded the fate of the persecuted animal or the skill of his tormentors, he had found "metal more attractive;" for as his vagrant eye wandered among the galaxy of charms which surrounded the queen, it had been arrested by a fair and beaming countenance of such innocent, yet lofty beauty, that it won at once the homage of his gay and romantic spirit.

But we must pause here to warn the reader that the age whence (with no idle motive, though it be sustained but feebly) we are culling a few striking scenes, was far anterior to that which witnessed England's queen hesitate between the genius of Shakespeare and the delights of a bear-garden, to which she habitually led the ladies of her household, and beheld unshrinkingly the fierce hugs that crushed the gallant hounds and strewed the gory sand with their mangled bodies. Far different however from such brutal sport was the venturous strife of the bull arena, which gentlest dames beheld with a similar interest to that bestowed on the dangerous but gallant feats of the tourney; for the female character displayed in those distant times, not only an intensity of tenderness, but also a perfection of the sterner and more heroic virtues, which will never be attributed to these days of "sickly sensibility."

During our formidable digression, the stranger's gaze continued rivetted on the fair young face

which he had singled out from among the many lovely ones which surrounded the sovereign. She watched the combat with an excitement natural in that age and nation, and the various emotions of apprehension, triumph, and suspense that agitated her mind were legibly portrayed on her noble features. Suddenly, however, the colour faded from cheek and lip, and shrinking, as if from some sight of horror, she veiled her eyes with her hands. Henriquez and the stranger youth at the same instant turned to the arena, whereon every eye was rivetted in an agony of fear.

The usual exploits had been performed with the usual variety of success, or partial discomfiture, and the bull (one of the most ferocious and powerful breed) began to be weary of the rough sport, when the aged forcador before mentioned chose again to challenge the admiration of the multitude by his cool courage and well-known adroitness. Advancing deliberately, as before, to the centre of the arena, he defied the furious

animal to the combat, and his companions the while collected at some distance to witness the feat and await his signal to relieve him of his vanquished foe. The bull was not slow in accepting the challenge,—he rushed upon his opponent, but raising his head higher than the man had expected, struck him with exceeding violence, and hurled him to the ground. Ere the capin-has, all unprepared for so unthought-of a mischance, could start from their panic of astonishment and dismay, the bull, stopping in his headlong career, had wheeled rapidly round, and the fate of the stunned forcador seemed inevitable. At that instant, when an agony of fear suspended even the breath of the gazing crowds, a single shout arose,—one voice was heard, loud and clear as the note of a clarion: “St. George!” it cried, “St. George for merry England!”—and with a single bound the young stranger stood across the prostrate form of the stricken champion. The bull was startled for a moment by

the sudden apparition—then mad with fury and baffled rage, rushed with closed eyes and stooping forehead on the unarmed youth. At every step of his broad hoofs, clouds of loose sand flew into the air, and his wiery and tufted tail swinging uplifted in the air seemed to steady his headlong speed. He neared his daring foe—reached him,—then suddenly paused—reeled backward—quivered for a moment, and sunk motionless to the earth ! A blow from the closed hand of the young Englishman had slain him ! To attempt a description of the uproar which followed would utterly fail. Every voice was uplifted in enthusiastic applause of an exploit as novel as it was unexpected. Joy for the rescue of a popular favourite—admiration of the bold prowess that saved him—agitated to phrenzy the excited crowd. Some leapt into the arena, and ascertaining that the animal was really dead, returned to impart the fact and increase the general clamour ; until at length every voice echoed the same cry, to which no answer could be obtained

—“Who is he?” Useless was every effort to renew the sports ;—even the court started from the apathy of its formal etiquette,—exclamations of applause (only restrained to low murmurs by the presence of the king) arose from the vicinity of the throne ; and Alphonso, to whose favour so daring an act was the surest passport, sent Caelho himself to bring the unknown to his presence. The officious zeal of the nobleman, however, could learn nothing save what all the spectators knew full well,—that after his exploit the youth had lightly sprung on to the barrier that surrounded the arena, and disappeared. But finding that he had been observed conversing with Henriquez, the count ordered the astonished student to be conducted to his palace.

To the great surprise and disappointment of the king and his whole court, d'Ercilia returned unsuccessful ; and Alphonso having ordered that the young man should be discovered, and brought before him on the following day, the sports were

renewed ; but they had lost their interest, and as the spear of the matador dispatched the last victim, the king gave an impatient signal for the return to the palace.

CHAPTER IV.

"He is as a rock,
Opposed to the rude sea that beats against it,
Worn by the waves, yet still o'ertopping them
In sullen majesty."

WITH demonstrations of respect and affection, at least equal to those which welcomed his coming, the populace attended their sovereign to his barge; but it was not difficult for a shrewd observer to note, that if they beheld with the zeal of habitual loyalty their aged monarch, it was on the heir-apparent that their hopes rested; and around him was gathered their trust, and sympathy, and love. Something of this had often alarmed the jealous mind of Alphonso, (who was in his secret soul fully conscious that his reign was but as a foil to that of his illustrious sire,) and aided by the wily arts of the sycophant

on whom he bestowed his confidence, daily increased the distrust he entertained towards his virtuous son.

The transit from land to water was not effected without some slight confusion (either designed or accidental) among the courtiers,—and one of the queen's ladies became separated from her companions. Unconscious of the circumstance, or perhaps not sorry that the accidental delay enabled her to give more than a passing glance to the gay scene presented by the river; she stood gazing on the giddy waves, which, broken into mere ripples by the incessant movement of innumerable barges, were glittering in the rays of the declining sun. She was aroused from her reverie by a low but distinct whisper, which harshly murmured close beside her: “Methinks this gallant masquerader will find to-day's feat too much for his disguise; but Donna Inez will doubtless rejoice to behold her champion divested of his mask!”

At the same instant a nobleman advanced,

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and bowing with the most courteous and affable smile, proposed to conduct the lady to her barge. She started to behold Caelho by her side, but to refuse his proffered courtesy was impossible; and almost stunned by the thoughts those bitter words had awakened, she instinctively hurried into the barge that was now receiving its stately freight at the stairs. On recovering from the stupor of the moment, however, she found to her no small confusion, that she had seated herself in the barge of the Infant, instead of that of the sovereign; and also that her foe had quietly placed himself by her side. She instantly arose, but the boat had left the landing, and Caelho gently obliging her to resume her seat, whispered that the queen's barge had preceded them, and a nobleman had been glad to avail himself of the place rendered vacant by her delay. "The queen," he added, "perceived the mischance, and by a sign indicated that we had better secure places here."

Inez saw no remedy but patiently to endure

the disagreeable proximity of her discarded suitor, until, on reaching the palace, she should rejoin her companions ; but at the same time cast a wistful glance around her, with beseeching eyes that appeared to ask for succour. In that hurried survey she met the earnest gaze of Don Pedro, in which she saw, or fancied, something of displeasure ; and fearing that she was regarded as an intruder, her eyes fell to the ground.

“Señor Caelho !” exclaimed the prince, with a loud and commanding voice, “methinks thou hast conferred more than its due honour on our barge, by introducing one of the queen’s ladies here !” Caelho’s teeth left a white line on his nether lip, as the prince interrupted his reply by continuing : “Thou hast not done well, count,—for ’tis evident the change pleaseth not thy fair neighbour. As, however, to replace her in the barge of Donna Beatrice would be impossible, we impose on thee the task of conducting her to the side of our consort,—a place more fitting than the vicinage of a rough warrior for the repose of gentle lady.”

As the prince concluded, he arose, and meeting Inez, (whom Caelho with obsequious smile conducted towards him,) presented her to his consort. The Infanta received the beautiful girl with her habitual and immovable suavity, and instantly relapsed into her usual unthoughtful silence; while Inez, recovering from the slight confusion occasioned by the notice which Don Pedro's courtesy drew upon her, felt greatly relieved to find herself no longer under the protection or near the person of her dreaded foe.

The prince resumed the conversation which had just commenced, the subject of which was the strange youth who formed the wonder of the day; and soon the presence both of Inez and Caelho (who joined not in the discourse) appeared forgotten by all. Deeply was the pride of the latter mortified, by the almost contemptuous bearing of the prince towards him, whose scant charity for the corrupter of his father's counsels was no secret at court: but Inez listened with

trembling earnestness to the conjectures and opinions that were uttered around her, in the hope of hearing something that would confirm or remove the idea, imparted by the whispered hint of Caelho, that the bull-slayer was her own unknown deliverer. Nothing transpired however, that could confirm or remove her suspicion; and when every possible supposition had been uttered respecting the extraordinary disappearance of the stranger, a youth on whose chin the straggling down (far more highly prized by the aspiring wearer than is ever the fate of the ample beard it preludes,) just deepened its olive tint, exclaimed ;—" 'Twas not so very difficult a feat, only never before thought on !—Ere a week be past, half the youth of Lisbon will have attempted it !"

" I hope not," replied Don Pedro, who had hitherto silently listened to the various remarks; "and I charge thee, Don Antonio, to beware thou engage not in such rash and aimless adventure. I caution thee the rather that I know

thy daring spirit equal to the bold attempt."

The youth blushed, for he felt that the words his prince had uttered would be accounted praise by all his gay and venturous compeers. "Portugal deserves better of her sons," continued the Infant, "than that they should wage unequal war with ferocious brutes. Think not, however, that I undervalue the wondrous exploit which has fired the hearts of a people with admiration and surprise; no, the youth's *motive* ennobled the action—he rushed forward when thousands sat in mute despair, and his astonishing promptitude and skill saved an accountable being from sudden destruction."

"Yes," observed a noble of middle age, and grave, thoughtful countenance, who sat next the Prince "but I much question if one half the youths who envy him the deed, do not admire far more the strength of body he evidently possessed, than those mental qualities which made it available to so noble an end. Few indeed will perceive that 'twas not his

strength (which scarcely rendered him the equal of the animal,) but his presence of mind, admirable courage, and chivalrous sympathy with one in mortal peril, which enabled him to destroy it."

"Thy just remark, Carvalhaos," said the prince, "suggests another. What a mass of strength was in that crowded amphitheatre! sufficient to have torn the furious beast to atoms ere he could approach his prostrate victim;—yet of all that mighty force, but one arm was found that aimed at rescue! Was it not then the mighty mind rather than the powerful frame that saved the forcador? Ah that the young aspirants for the honour of chivalry would ever bear this in mind, and remember that it is charity, and gentle courtesy, and piety, and unstained honour, that form the perfect knight, and render his courage available to noblest deeds!"

As the prince ceased to speak, the barge paused, for they had reached the palace stairs,

where the one immediately preceding it was now unloading its freight. "Our short voyage is terminated," continued Don Pedro, and as if just recollecting his trust, he looked towards the lady Inez. The beaming glance of the fair girl yet glistened with the admiration elicited by his noble sentiments, but was cast down as his eyes met hers. It is true that when the incident was afterwards discussed by those, to whom the prince was the "observed of all observers," there were not wanting some who said he slightly coloured beneath the maiden's radiant eye, and others who declared that he glanced towards his languid and apathetic bride, as though he would gladly have beheld some similar emotion there;—but all such as are familiar with the gossip of courts will be at no loss to what to attribute both fancies. To some more leisure moment however the subject must be referred for decision, for with scarce a pause Don Pedro said: "I would not that such disrespect were displayed towards the queen, as

for any individual to quit this barge until her grace's attendant be restored to her appointed duty. To thy charge, Don Antonio, I commit this fair and noble lady ; thou hast now an opportunity of assuring us that thy courtesy is at least equal to thy courage."

Soul-torturing were the reflections of Caelho, as, assuming an indifferent air, he sat brooding over his mortification and discontent, perfectly unnoticed the while by the prince or his attendants ; for the latter were as ready as courtiers in the present day to catch the tone of princes, and beheld without regret the humiliation of one whom they all dreaded as well as despised. The return of Don Antonio with the queen's thanks for Don Pedro's respectful attention to one of her household, preceded the embarkation of the prince and his consort ; and the instant they had landed, Caelho, without exchanging greetings with any of his neighbours, sprung ashore, muttering curses on the barge and all whom it contained.

In another instant he was behind the king, and his face wore its usual imperturbable smile, even as though not the merest accident had occurred to ruffle his repose.

“What untoward chance pursues thee now?” muttered Gonçalves, beside whom he walked.

“The devil!” growled Caelho betwixt his closed teeth; still preserving, however, the calm and courteous expression of his features. Gonçalves noticed his reply but by a slight elevation of his eyebrows, and they pursued their path in silence.

CHAPTER V.

" The large grene courts where we were wont to hove,
With eyes cast up into the mayden's tower,
And easie sighes, such as men draw in love ;
The statelie seates, the ladies bright of hue,
The dances short, long tales of great delight,"
With words and looks that tigers could but rue."

Surrey.

THE evening of the day on which the court had visited the amphitheatre of Lisbon was one of festal splendour in the gardens of the palace. The refresco, or slight evening repast, had been served beneath its light alcoves, and at the hour when the modern leaders of the gay world commence their most substantial meal, the noble and beautiful of the court of Alphonso IV. inhaled the balmy air of evening, amid the formal terraces, and shaded alleys, and pleached walks of his favourite summer palace.

Noble dames, at whose bidding the bravest blades of Portugal would have sprung from their scabbards,—graceful and meek, and for the most part sweetly sad,—might have been seen on that glorious eve pacing with slow and stately steps the formal paths, or resting in the shaded bowers, or collecting in small groups around the rustic resting place of some favourite dowager, (theme of the minstrels of an age gone by,) whose mild cheerfulness loved the animated conversation of the young.

And gallant knights and nobles, clad in the gay robes of festal pomp, formed of the richest silks and velvets, and cloth of silver and gold, heavily embroidered and glittering with jewels; requited themselves by one hour of triumph and dazzling splendour, for days of self-denying and perilous duties. Perhaps, had one been among that festive crowd whose mind was so entirely free from selfish hopes and fears as to permit him to be a mere spectator of the scene, he might have marked many a youthful dreamer

lingering near a group of stately maidens, and believing himself but too blest if the eyes he loved dwelt on him for one passing moment, and not unkindly. Perhaps to that glorious eye many might trace in after years the first lighting in his bosom of the bright lamp that pointed him to those heroic deeds which handed down his name, a glory and a wonder to succeeding times ;—or the commencement of a love, hopeless, but undying, which weaning him by sorrow and disappointment from a sinning world, eventually led him to the peaceful cell, where he learned to fix his affections on that “eternal beauty” which alone is faultless!—Such was love in the days of knightly deeds !

Glorious chivalry ! thou brightest dream of weak, erring, humanity ! ennobling and enlightening barbaric times ! Though maimed and marred, as all our blessings are, by the evils of our fallen nature,—surely thou, with all thy unselfish labours, thy sympathy for the weak and succourless, thy championship of enslaved

womanhood, thy courtesy, thy piety, thy unmatched and venturous bravery,—mayest be called one of the loveliest creations of Christianity, compared with which the politest refinements of this most selfish age, are but churlish and barbarous egotisms !

Scarcely noted as they glided past were the rosy hours of the bright day that now waned over the royal gardens,—and though the presence of the sovereigns attracted many besides those whose duty kept them in attendance near their persons, every portion of the spacious plaisance had its jocund or thoughtful visitants. Of the latter description were three richly clad nobles, who far within the recesses of an embowered walk held close, and apparantly secret conference. Their words were whispered, and their faces brought closely together, as though no faintest echo of their converse might be suffered to reach the surrounding trees.

“Never was scheme better laid,” said the shortest of the three, who displayed the unpre-

possessing features of Don Alvaro Gonçalez ; by what evil mischance failed it to succeed ?”

“ Did I not tell thee ?” replied Caelho fiercely,—“ e’en by the interposition of the foul fiend, in the person of the Infant !”

“ Nay, nay, fair señor, mistake thou not so gravely. I’ faith, thy designs are seldom of a nature to be crossed by such sable intelligence ! But now inform us, I pray thee, how it chanced. Believe me, had thy appearance been deferred another moment, I should have committed myself with the queen irretrievably ; for I was just on the point of explaining to her the absence of the Castilian, as we had arranged.”

“ Aye, tell us at once,” rejoined Pacheco, who completed the group,—“ for I also am impatient to know wherefore I, who had so entirely entered into your plan, was of no aid in it at last.”

“ Listen then !” replied Caelho, in his harshest tones.—“ The detention of Donna Inez at the stairs was skilfully effected.”

"That was my task!" said Pacheco, conceitedly."

Caelho, without marking the interruption, continued: "And I presume she was not missed, for the queen's barge left the quay soon after thou, Don Diego, had taken the lady's place therein. I also contrived to mew my shy falcon in the barge which succeeded it at the stairs, but the mischief consisted in that being the vessel of Don Pedro. Could I have detained her another moment, all might have been well; but, by my father's soul!" he bitterly exclaimed, "I believe she would have walked into the river when she heard my voice, if no barge had been waiting there!"

"A delightful effect to be produced by the accents of noble knight, when breathed in the ear of fair lady!" exclaimed Pacheco.

Caelho's brows lowered, but he mastered the gathering storm, and replied in his blindest tones." Coyness,—mere coyness, Don Diego,—she is as shy as a wild antelope!"

“ Well, I see not why our scheme might not have yet succeeded, since we only aimed at separating her from the queen’s party, to whom she was to have been re-conducted by thee ere this hour. Thy promise, Caelho, was, thou knowest, to bring the damsel back to her father when the vow was sworn ?” said Pacheco.

“ What avails reminding me of my promise now, since I can neither keep nor break it ?” replied Caelho fiercely.

“ Hush !” interposed the more wily Gonçalez, who, intent on his own aims, saw, but heeded not the perfidy of the one knight, or the simplicity of the other. “ Hush ! I say,—or we shall be overheard by some stray butterfly ; and thou, Pacheco, remember, that a galling disappointment hath pained our friend ; and thy playful sallies, however amusing at another time, do but wound him now.—I pray thee resume thy narrative, señor, for as yet I swear I see not what obstacle interposed to circumvent our arrangement.”

“ Know, then, that ere the lady had recovered her surprise, the prince observed us, and nothing could satisfy his chivalrous respect for the fair, but conducting the intruder beside his little apathetic spouse, to whom his attentions are so unremittingly edifying. Leaving *me*, mark ye, to retain the obscure place which I had purposely selected to avoid observation. Imagine my situation ! treated with no more regard than one of the bargemen, nor even allowed to escort my fair companion ashore,—the prince deeming it more respectful towards the queen to send her under the charge of one of his own household. But the deep mortification of this day shall be the beginning of a score to be registered in my memory, and paid off on a future day,” he continued, in those low hissing tones which grated so harshly on the startled ear. “ Yes, Pedro ! prince though thou art,—thou hast done well hitherto in avoiding a collision with Caelho !—but only nurse with a few fresh injuries the seed thou hast this day sown, and thou shall reap the harvest of the Dead Sea,—ashes and bitterness !”

The florid hue of Caelho faded as he spoke, his livid lips receded from his gnashing teeth, and as he stretched forth his clenched hand, his friends involuntarily receded from beside him, scared by the ghastly malignity of his countenance. But he suddenly recovered his former calm, and hastily resumed the conversation, as if regretting his emotion, and anxious to obliterate the remembrance of it.

“ Had I been permitted to land with my fair charge, it would not have been difficult for thee, Pacheco, to have assumed her escort in the name of the queen; and to lead her (who is unacquainted with the ways of the palace,) to the spot we had appointed, would have been equally easy. But the scheme is frustrated, and we must think of some other; mine she *shall* be—it is her fate! She may avert it for awhile;—but my will is not to be for the first time in my life thwarted by an inexperienced girl.”

“ Her constant attendance on her sick father renders her almost invisible,” urged Pacheco;

“even the queen remits her attendance, in consideration of her duty to the infirm knight. We may therefore wait long for another aim at thy gentle doe.”

“Content thee,—Sebastian cannot live long. I am merciful, and care not to deprive him of his daughter, so he lose no time in taking his departure.”

“Report avers,” replied the cautious Gonzalez, “the old knight is even now near his end.”

“Would he were dead!” muttered Caelho; “for though but a dotard, he stands betwixt me and my prey.”

“Your prize,” insinuated Gonzalez.

“Ah, yes,—my prize!—or rather *our* prize, good Alvaro,—since by aiding me in securing her, you will both share with me her rich dower.”

The smiles that were exchanged by the worthy trio proved them nearer allied in soul than in appearance; and after a pause, Gonzalez observed: —“Thou hast now a task, señor, assigned thee

by the king, which will, methinks, require all thy wondrous sagacity. Art thou not bound to the discovery of the strange champion of the arena?"

"Ha! thou dost well to remind me," replied Caelho; "but fear not for my success in that chase; I have already set such blood-hounds on his track as never lose scent, or fail of courage!"

"But why blood-hounds?" asked Pacheco; "would not a more gentle spy have better served for the capture of one so humane and brave?"

"Canst thou not guess, then, who is that stranger?" And as Caelho thus inquired, he gazed on his companions from beneath his overhanging brow, with calm but fiery earnestness.

"Know who he is?"—they both exclaimed; "certainly not. No one can form a conjecture who he may be,—knowest thou?"

"I guess," replied the knight.

"And may we be partakers of thy surmises?" asked Gonzalez.

“Remember ye not one of whom I told ye, who twice thwarted my designs on this young Castilian?”

“And thou thinkest ’tis he?”

“Think!—I cannot doubt it. He who could master Caelho in the fight, might safely enter the lists against a raging bull; and the hand that with one naked blow dashed into the living brain the skull of yon brute, this day,—that same hand, and no other, broke with its iron grasp the steel rings of my haubert, and crushed the fragments deep in my shoulder, when he tore me from the side of Inez!”

The two listening noblemen exchanged glances, but for some moments made no reply. Caelho, chafed by the remembrance his words recalled, walked backwards and forwards like a caged brute whose will to spread havoc and dismay hath been thwarted. Pacheco was first to speak.

“Did the lady, then, object to thy escorting her to Lisbon?—or how came this knight to in-

terfere betwixt two whose faith, as thou sayest, hath been so long plighted?"

"Have I not before told thee, that without opposition of word or look on her part,—'tis true, by Heaven!—I was assisting her to her litter, when the officious knave (some jealous rival, as I suppose) rushed in and overpowered me in that unguarded moment; but wherefore repeat?—art thou turned dullard?"

The red spot was in an instant on Pacheco's brow, but Gongalez interposed—"Aye, why repeat, indeed?—how should the lady object to coming to Lisbon, since she evidently hastened hither as soon as she had dismissed this too persevering lover? But the evening is rapidly closing, my friends; already the buzz from the plaisance grows fainter; had we not better mingle with the remaining idlers in the garden, since our future movements must depend on the lingering breath of Don Sebastian?"

"'Tis well observed, good Alvare;—now therefore we part, but be careful to join me at an early hour to-morrow."

With brief adieu, Caelho turned into a diverging path; and the others soon afterwards separating, mingled with the guests that yet loitered in the garden.

In a distant part of the plaisaunce, she who had formed the chief subject of the long conference held by those dark and subtile minds, had withdrawn herself a little apart from her companions, and finding in a sequestered spot an unoccupied seat, gladly seized a few tranquil moments for quiet and uninterrupted reflection. Behind the rustic couch on which she rested, a closely trained hedge of myrtle formed a dense and fragrant screen; and as various parties passed along the wide walk it bounded, the low music of their voices fell upon the ear of Inez, with a soft murmur which rather aided than disturbed her reverie. Long sat she there silent and motionless, with veiled eyes cast down, unobserved by all, and unconscious of the deepening shades. But though we may, Asmodeus-like, listen to the secret counsels of courtiers, or reveal the

hidden thoughts that lurk within the dark recesses of a villain's mind,—yet venture we not, with unholy eye, to pry within the sanctuary of that gentle bosom; content to know that its thoughts, even though clouded perchance by anxieties that herald a passion dangerous to its peace, are yet such as Innocence might call her own. Of whatever import however, they were all-absorbing, and prevented her from remarking that the voices of the gay loiterers were more seldom heard around her, and the low sound of distant converse grew every moment fainter, and the footsteps which had hitherto been heard in the adjoining walk had altogether ceased. The timid birds, which, scared by the festive throngs, had taken refuge in the closest thickets, now once more perched on the swinging spray of the orange-trees that bloomed around, and attuned their voices to the the sweet songs of evening; and gentle creatures began to peep from their impervious retreats, as if impatient to commence their moonlight revels;—but she observed them not.

From so absorbing a reverie, it must be a powerful spell that can awake her ;—but behold one of searching potency is at hand ! It struck on her startled ear,—soft, clear, and deeply toned ; the remembered music of that most welcome voice, which she had only heard when it came to succour and to save ! The languid pulses of her heart were quickened into the rapid throb of joy, —every faculty of her soul was aroused at once ; she started from her seat, and stood with sculptured lips apart, bending slightly forward in an attitude of eager attention. The expectation which danced in her radiant eyes, her graceful attitude, and clasped beseeching hands, appeared to say,—“ Oh, speak again ! ”—but unconscious whence the voice proceeded, she almost dreamed some invisible intelligence had breathed beside her those angelic tones.

But there *were* sounds near her, though she marked them not,—the faint echo of footsteps in the adjoining walk, and low whispered words ; but these, if heard, she heeded not. Suddenly,

however, that mournful voice so faithfully remembered, spoke again. It was close beside her, and ere she could move from the spot, these words fell distinctly on her ear :—" All I ask is, that thy well-known influence in the Castilian court procure the restoration of her hereditary rights. I have told thee she hath an implacable foe here—who even now is watching to enthrall her ;—yet on the caprice of this court is she helplessly dependent. Oh, secure the boon I ask, and some more generous land may give her a home, if this prove inhospitable !"

The voice so nigh, so clear, betrayed the speaker ; and Inez beheld above the myrtle screen, the tall plumes of two knights, who slowly paced down the deserted path, holding close converse. Ere the sentence was concluded they had passed the spot she occupied,—and half displeased with herself for having inadvertently overheard those few words,—fearful, too, of penetrating the secret of her friend,—she sunk on the rustic seat, faintly murmuring,—“ He is near me still ;—and his

guarding care is watching around me!—Yes, even now, when fear and distrust, and the coming shadows of the grave threaten to overwhelm my fainting heart!” Suddenly the two knights again appeared, traversing a path which crossed at right angles, and at a distance of some thirty yards, the one on which she sat. In an instant they were again concealed behind the intervening bowers, but she could not avoid recognising in the one nearest to her, the fine form and graceful head of the Infant,—without being able, however, to gain any knowledge of his companion, (on whose shoulder the prince leaned in an attitude of friendly confidence,) save to recognize in the dim twilight his well-remembered and stately figure. A moment of agitating reflection was succeeded by a consciousness of the gloom and silence that was gathering around her; with hasty step she left the spot, her thoughts the while balancing between the wish, with difficulty repressed, to behold for one moment her unknown

friend, and an anxious inquiry whether she could possibly have avoided the involuntary confidence of which she had unintentionally possessed herself.

CHAPTER VI.

" There is a world above,
Where parting is unknown ;
A long eternity of love,
Formed for the good alone ;
And faith beholds the dying, here,
Translated to that glorious sphere !"

Montgomery.

IN the brief interview which Caelho on his return from the palace held with Henriquez de Zibrieria, the crafty mind of the courtier quickly scanned the simple heart of the alchemist ; that he was the son of the late hostess of Donna Inez was, however, his only discovery ; for, in truth, the youth knew no more of the stranger than did his questioner.

He was therefore soon dismissed ; and the plotter sought his pillow, whence the various

schemes of his busy brain scared for many an hour the coveted approach of sleep.

It was far otherwise with the guileless being whose truthfulness and simplicity rendered her unfit to cope with such matchless deceit and cunning. Having ministered with tenderest love to the comforts of that beloved parent, who to every eye but her own was fast sinking into the grave, and in soothing accents read to him some lessons of eternal truth and soothing hope, —she, too, sought her couch, and found there such calm repose as blesses the lids sealed on a mother's bosom.

And with the sun's return she arose from her tranquil slumbers ; and having offered the first thoughts of her pure soul to the Lord of all, hastened to her father's couch, and kneeling, implored his blessing.

"Mayest thou be blessed, my child !" the old man feebly said ; "may the Father of the fatherless bless thee for evermore !"

The sadness of his languid accents smote

painfully on the young girl's heart ; she tenderly kissed the fevered brow of her beloved parent, and by a thousand sweet and consoling words strove to cheer his drooping spirit. The melody of her gentle voice charmed away that dim forethought of approaching doom, which mercifully whispers the friendly warning to those whom death has marked for his own ; and as if some portion of her young life had been imparted by her beloved presence, the father felt less his prostrated strength, and the heavy languor of the sick man's waking. Urged by her wistful eyes, he endeavoured to partake of the morning's refreshment ; but far more enjoyed the cool breezes, whose freshness brought to his weakened frame some slight renewal of his lost vigour.

Nor was aught forgotten that anxious love could prompt to relieve the tedium of prolonged infirmity ; and as Inez decorated his chamber with the fragrant beauty of dewy flowers, she ever and anon whilst flitting around his couch, turned to bless him with such smiles as beam

from ministering angels, who in radiant visions cheer with love and hope the last moments of departing saints.

When every means for his corporeal relief had been attempted, the lady knelt beside him ; and mingling the silver sweetness of her gentle voice with his feeble and trembling tones, the exiles offered to heaven their morning orisons. Their short oblation ended, with bowed and reverent heads they gave a few moments to silent meditation,—and in that moment the faint and solemn sound of bells was suddenly wafted from the numerous churches in the awakening city, and might have been not unaptly compared to angelic voices responding to their prayers.

“ I must leave thee now, my beloved father,—in a few moments we shall hear the bell of the queen's chapel !”

“ Thou wilt never forget me in thy prayers ?” replied the knight feebly.

“ Ah, no, my father !—every mass I hear I offer up for thee.”

“ Bless thee, my Inez !—but for thy defencelessness I would ask that thy prayers might shorten my weary pilgrimage ! But His will be done ! I am indeed too loath to leave thee, my gentle lamb, amidst the world’s gaunt wolves ; but the heavenly Shepherd never slumbers ; and we will place our trust where none ever reposed their hopes in vain. The counsels of the venerable father have taught me to quell my impatient spirit ; and strength from on high hath enabled me to behold terrestrial things with a calm indifference. Thou art the sole link that now binds my soul to this vain world. Oh, ask for me this day,—and for thyself too, my gentle child, a perfect conformity to Heaven’s will.” Large heavy drops coursed each other down the cheeks of Inez as with head averted she listened to those boding words. “ Thou wilt do my bidding, as thou hast ever done ? ”

She pressed her lips to his pallid brow, and murmuring an assenting reply, hurried from his presence.

But slow and spiritless were the lady's footsteps when she had crossed the threshold of her dying parent; for that heavy oppression was upon her, which we feel, alas! when for the first time warned that death is about to rob us of our sole earthly stay. The warning voice of Don Sebastian could not be mistaken,—he felt that his hold on things terrene was daily loosening; and as Inez traced the numerous corridors whose intricate windings rendered the distance considerable between her father's chamber and the royal apartments, a lonely feeling of desolation crushed all the energies of the young girl's heart.

It was a solemn and soothing spot, that small regal chapel, and one whereinto many a mourner, sad as herself, had brought their woes, and returned to their daily struggle refreshed and strengthened.

A venerable architect, whose fame had been wafted from his humble monastery over many lands, had complied with the prayer of the pious

consort of Alphonso, to superintend and assist in the erection of this *her* chapel. And honourable to himself as well as to the generous princess (who had sacrificed many a vain and foolish bauble dear to female vanity for the more costly enrichment of God's altar) was the exquisite beauty of that small temple. Its lofty and intricately groined roof was supported by tall shaft-like columns of spotless marble, and mullions of the most delicate tracery divided the glowing compartments of the slender windows. A screen of elaborate carved work, richly painted and gilded, divided the choir from the nave, and from its wide loft sprang the rood—memorial of an agony that redeemed a world—with the two faithful mourners, who when all else had fled, remained, unscared by ignominy and death ! The sculptor and painter had each done his part to render the expression of the three figures of that most touching group replete with meaning ; for the representation of the tragedy of Calvary was in those days regarded as a perfect homily.

Around the altar were collected all rare and costly things; gold and gems, and marble and stained glass, aided by painting, and sculpture, and tapestries, on whose heavy folds the most touching narratives of sacred history were portrayed with consummate skill, each appearing in its appropriate and fitting place; for the philosophy of the middle ages deemed that the most lavish hand could never sufficiently adorn the temple of which that of Solomon was but a type.

Such was the sacred spot the youthful stranger sought, and kneeling on the marble floor, beside a broad pillar which screened her from observation, she raised her weeping eyes towards the sanctuary; and in so doing, beheld above the screen the piteous memorial of griefs so bitter, so overwhelming, as, thus recalled by that eloquent representation of them, well nigh obliged her to forget her own. Her tears ceased to flow, or were no longer selfish; for could she remember her own sorrows whilst beholding that fainting

head, crowned with insult, and drooping with agony?—or be absorbed wholly in her own trials, whilst perusing the words traced beneath the rood, in the venerable and universal language of the church?—*O vos omnis, qui transitis per viam, attendite et videte, si est dolor similis sicut dolor meus!*”*

The morning struggled slowly through the gem-like windows of the nave, which were crowded with the histories of saints and martyrs; but shortly after the entrance of Inez, the sun's beams poured a flood of radiance through the splendid eastern window, and, enriched with its glorious hues, tinted many a venerable form of sculptured saint or prophet that adorned the stalls and stately sedilium; and thence descending to the marble floor, they bathed in rainbow rays the spot at the entrance of the choir, where a few humble words asked the prayers of the faithful for the soul of the architect whose dust reposed

* “O, all that pass by, attend and see, if there be sorrow like unto my sorrow!”

beneath. As the sun yet higher rose, the flood of jewelled light grew broader, and by degrees the cunning carved-work within the sanctuary, wherein burned only that one lamp which was never quenched, began to emerge from the gloom that had enveloped them, and its gildings glistened as though it were already lighted up for some glorious festival.

Happy was it for the youthful mourner that the sweet influences of religion were around her, speaking to her heart with a thousand voices, which were familiar to her as household words, although they found her in a foreign land! Yes,—the altar with its mystic presence was before her, inviting her with those tender words,—“Come to me all ye who are heavily laden!” The dying head that bent towards her from above seemed to say,—“Take up your cross and follow me,”—and from every storied window, and sculptured niche, from screen and canopy and groined roof, and monumental brass and lowly tomb, voices—“not loud but deep”—whispered to

her heart,—“Blessed are they that mourn!”—whilst every upward tapering window and pointed arch, and little pinnacle which darted heavenward its crocketed spire, hinted at sublimest hopes, before which, this passing scene with all its joys and cares, fades into utter insignificance, save as it availeth to prepare the young intelligence for its destined home. No wonder that innocent soul found its griefs hushed, its fears allayed, its desolation entirely gone; that she no longer felt lonely, since God and his countless angels were around her; nor homeless whilst in a land where His temples were never closed.

Whilst thus Inez meditated, footsteps glided noiselessly over the marbled floor, and numerous worshippers gradually assembled in all parts of the nave,—some approaching near the sanctuary, others kneeling at a reverent distance,—many seeking the obscurity of a pillar's shade, and a few anxious to secure such dim light as the stained windows afforded;—but all alike silent, reverent, and devout.

Even the entrance of the queen, with her daughter and their attendants, only deepened the subdued sounds; and forgetting their earthly rank in the presence of the Heavenly King, the royal ladies knelt side by side, in equality with those around them, and probably the most lowly-minded of all who assembled there.

The solemn commemorative sacrifice was concluded,—all the assistants had departed,—the queen and her attendant had also retired; when Donna Inez at length arose, and with a strengthened heart—though the full conviction of her father's approaching death, hitherto only regarded as a threatened danger, was clearly imprinted thereon,—prepared to rejoin that beloved parent. As she crossed the sacred threshold, a well-known voice accosted her.

“Good morrow, daughter,—how fares our friend?”

The figure of him who thus addressed the lady was tall, and though all gentleness, of great dignity. He was simply clad in a long robe of dark

serge, and his uncovered and intellectual head with its few closely cropped locks of grey aided the expression of his calm, thoughtful eyes. Inez rejoiced to behold her venerable friend the Abbade de San José, and meekly bending her knee, received his blessing. They walked together through the winding passages, and the young girl with a trembling voice imparted her too well assured fears. The gentle words of the good father further fortified her mind; and as they together entered the sick-chamber, her first glance at her father, as he reclined in his cushioned chair, filled her with astonishment that she should only now have detected the tendency of his malady.

After a short conversation, the sick man found himself alone with his spiritual director, and confided to the safe sanctuary of his bosom, all his doubts, his fears, his struggles, receiving in return such consolations as only those who have experienced can understand.

From a theme to himself all-important, the

knight at length recurred to that which clung so closely to his heart of clay.—“My child,—my friendless, dowerless child ! appease, good father, the consuming solicitude that harasses me, and methinks I can rejoice to quit this weary world.”

“Friendless ! dowerless !”—repeated the religious ; “ah, my brother, what better friend can thy Inez possess than Him who is the orphan’s father ? what better friend than the sweet mother of the motherless ? And can she require a dower whose guardian is Lord of all things ? —Oh, did we but truly trust in Him, and correspond implicitly with His designs, wretchedness, hopeless wretchedness, would quit this world, and Eden be found wherever man’s foot hath trod ! Alas ! ’tis sin, ’tis disobedience, ’tis the perpetual wilfulness of our evil nature, that prolongs the primal curse ; and renders man’s days little varied save by disappointment and regret !

“But in pity for the anxieties of a father’s heart, behold I am permitted to show thee to whom is

delegated the trust thou hast placed in Heaven.

The queen has commanded me to intimate her intention of visiting thee this day, when noon is past,—to announce the intended removal of the court to Lisbon, and to propose that thyself and Donna Inez continue here. Her considerate care has provided that Donna Isabel de Lourinha remain with Donna Inez as her companion and friend ; but the chief intention of the royal visit is to cheer thee with the personal assurance that thy orphan child shall find in her grace a steady friend and protectress.”

“Blessed be God !” murmured the dying knight,—tears of thankfulness falling from his up-raised eyes.—“Now can I indeed die in peace !” —But in a few moments the world entered his heart once more ;—looking around him, he observed,—“Yet, a sick-chamber, reverend father, is an unfit reception-room for such a visitor.”

“Sickness and death,” replied the abbadè gravely, “level the disparities of rank. Royalty exempts not a Christian from the duties of

charity, of which, one of the most important, is the visitation of such as are near their end. Nor think, my friend, that scenes like this are unfamiliar to that virtuous princess, who neglects no duty. Perhaps of all her subjects, I alone (whom my office of almoner to her highness enables more nearly to observe her excellence,) could inform thee, that often doth she stand unknown beside the dying, and there calling to mind her own doom, learn to use the vanities that surround her, as if she used them not. Ah be sure that they who shrink from the admonitions of the sick-bed,—who fly from the pillow of the departing Christian, are in danger of meeting death in an unprepared moment, and (as regard real consolations,) of expiring alone ! But let me warn thee, my friend, that on occasions such as this, the strict forms of etiquette are always laid aside,—only one attendant being permitted to accompany the queen.”

When shortly afterwards Inez returned to her father, the good religious (alluding less to

their approaching separation that to that future union where sorrow has no name) prepared the sick man by the holy rites—solemn and sad for those around, but of infinite consolation to the dying—with which the church takes leave of her children on this side the grave, though still following them with her prayers ; after which the good pastor departed, leaving behind him his meek benediction, and hearts chastened and resigned.

CHAPTER VII.

Cymb. No tidings of him ?

Pisani. He hath been searched among the dead and living,
But no trace of him.

Cymbeline.

UNQUESTIONED by guard or sentinel, unannounced by liveried page, venture we to enter with bold feet, a royal and stately room. It was hung with tapestry, whose quaint groups of figures, undimmed by the consuming breath of time, glowed with the richest and tenderest hues ; and which, when the bitter blast howled around the angles of the palace, quivered as though the massive walls were shaken by its rude violence.

The imperfect fittings of the doors were in some part remedied by the heavy curtains of

crimson velvet that fell before them ; and on the wide hearth, piles of wood were heaped which warmed the extensive apartment.

The rich gildings and elaborate carvings of the massive furniture, and the cushions and footstools of three-piled velvet, served to atone for the wooden seats and rush-covered floor ; and beside the several windows that pierced the thick walls at proportionate intervals, hung silken curtains partly excluding the dim light, which, although noon had but few hours been past, was evidently on the wane.

The principal entrance to this stately chamber was denoted by the presence of a page, who stood beside its fringed drapery, clad in velvet vest and brodered hose, and wearing a small jewelled collar of gold. He ever and anon cast a wistful glance towards a bevy of fair and youthful maidens assembled beneath one of the curtained windows ; in the midst of whom appeared a slight frame of considerable size, whereon was stretched an unfinished piece

of tapestry. And as some of the ladies bent over it, and with skilful fingers disposed the glowing threads, whilst others assorted or wound the various silks required for its completion, those fair and graceful damsels formed a group which a painter might have joyed to study. And low, though not whispered converse beguiled the time,—most frequently on some topic connected with their occupation, but sometimes referring to the passing events of the day. One maiden, apparently the youngest of the group, handed to each fair embroidress the threaded needles ; and it was to her that the following words were addressed by one whom all appeared to regard with considerable deference :
“ ’Tis not the right shade of green, my Niña ;
I require a more olive tint :—aye this is better ;
but be more careful, sweet one, or I must decline thy offices.”

“ Dearest Donna Clara, the day grows dim.”

“ Then must those young eyes of thine become more piercing ; even this light is better

than that of tapers ; and the days are now so very short, that unless we press the beginning of twilight into our service, we shall scarce complete our work by Christmas."

"Of what colour are we to make the cloak of this shepherd? 'tis the only one not commenced,"—said an embroidress, appealing to the first speaker.

"I have not asked her grace,—but is it not better first to complete those already begun?"

"O, Donna Clara! how can I place my work beside that of Donna Inez?"

"Are we not all doing so? Were we to give way to our scruples on that score, the Nativity would arrive long ere the antependium is finished."

"Will not Donna Inez render any more assistance to us?"

All the ladies earnestly looked for the reply of Donna Clara, who answered: "The queen has only commanded that the head of the infant Saviour be unattempted, for her grace observed,

that no hand but the one which has embroidered that of the Madonna so exquisitely, may venture to undertake it."

"How I wish that her highness had included the heads of the shepherds and angels,—Donna Inez would soon have worked them all."

"Thou art forgetful, my Isabel,—is she not watching beside her sick father?"

"Alas!" remarked one who had hitherto remained silent,—“I fear that duty will not detain her long."

The cheerful voices were hushed; silence followed that boding speech, as if each young heart was subdued by the thought of the lovely Inez watching by the death-bed of her only relative.

"Is she not beautiful, that daughter of Castile?"—at length sighed one, whose inexperienced hand was only entrusted with the weeds that formed the foreground of the picture."

"Yes, and we all love her,—and often do I

remark the princess herself gazing on her fair face with those dove-like eyes, as though she read there all sorts of holy thoughts."

"And doubtless she doth so," answered Donna Clara; "for none but sweetest and holiest feelings find expression in the fair countenance of Donna Inez."

"When I last beheld it," said one who stood behind the speaker, winding some golden thread, "it was pale as marble; ah, well do ye all remember the day before the court returned to Lisbon. Did none of you remark what chanced when we were returning from the city after the last bull-fight?"

"Yes, I remember," replied Donna Clara; "doubtless she was more terrified by the peril of the forcador, than pleased by the gallantry that saved him."

"It is more likely, I think, that the Castilian lady felt hurt at the rudeness which compelled her to return to the palace surrounded by strangers," remarked a demure looking dame,

who for the first time joined in the conversation.

“ Ah, Donna Leonora, not unperceived was the discourtesy of that conceited Don Diego Pacheco, who thrust himself into the royal barge; thereby excluding Donna Inez from her place therein. I could have rejoiced if the king had ordered him to depart, or learn less ungallant behaviour to a noble lady, and a stranger.”

“ She has received from her royal mistress full atonement, however, for the chagrin that day endured,” replied Donna Clara; “ for the queen has treated the noble exiles with kindness, which even in her grace is unexampled. But is it not wonderful that no one has yet discovered the stranger who interposed so nobly between the old forcador and destruction?”

A new theme was now started,—the beauty and sorrows of Donna Inez were for a time forgotten, and numerous conjectures were offered and rejected respecting the unknown; each mind, however, leaning more or less to a dimly floating idea, rather insinuated than suggested,

that the stranger was no other than the guardian angel of the combatant, who interposed to save him from an unprepared death.

Whilst the maids of honour thus conversed and worked by turns, (for it was well known then, as now, that *both* cannot be achieved together,) a portion of the tapestry at one side of the room was lifted aside by the opening of a small door, and Donna Beatrice, the consort of Alphonso, followed by the Princess Donna Maria, entered from her oratory. The step was slow, and erect the carriage of the queen, as she walked towards a high-backed chair of ebony, inlaid with silver, which was placed on a foot-cloth of velvet near the cheerful hearth. Having seated herself thereon, she drew her young daughter towards her, and encircling her slight figure with her arm, gazed on her with tenderest love whilst they conversed in low tones. The royal ladies were clad in the long graceful robes of the period, the dress of the queen being composed of richest black velvet, unsparingly de-

corated with the finest pearls; and her head-gear, of simple and matronly form, was, with the quaintly shaped collar that relieved her robe, composed of that thick durable lace, sometimes represented on the monuments of a past age. The dress of the princess was also of velvet, its colour the rich deep crimson, whose deepest folds are black as night, and small roses were embroidered in gold at wide intervals over its whole surface. It was shaped in more youthful fashion than that of the queen, but with its spotless wimple permitted only her fair and graceful throat to be revealed. Her dark hair was gathered into braids and fastened by a single jewel—her only ornament. She was of middle height, and beautifully formed, and possessed a countenance which few could behold without warming with holiest feelings towards her. An expression of calm gentleness pervaded her delicately formed features; and her thoughtful downcast eyes, and well-closed mouth, hinted at gentlest resolves, and patient endurance. If there was a demure-

ness in her pale reflective countenance, it was untainted by austerity or gloom ; the peace of a quiet conscience hallowed and illuminated its sweet gravity, and the ready smile of charity and benevolence was ever hovering there.

In the face of the royal mother were traceable the same lines ; but the hand of time had deepened some, and given to others an angular sharpness. The same gentle benevolence and self-reliance were there, but of more calm and chastened character. The twain were fair types of the stages of life which each had attained ;—the one ready to assay the difficult and thorny path of unswerving duty, which the other had trod unshaken ; the one unpractised in the feebleness of her own heart, felt strong in her good intentions,—the other distrusted her own weakness, for she knew its tendency to betray.

Youth and age ! how unlike are all your thoughts ! how dissimilar the medium through which you view the same approaching object !—the first investing it with an unreal and delusive

brightness, the last too coldly veiling it in the sombre tinge imparted by its manifold disappointments. Can we wonder that the old and young find it impossible to assimilate, and each wondering at the other's phantasies seek separate ways? Oh, too common, and oftentimes fatal error!—for thereby do the aged, losing the cheering society of the young, sink into churlishness and discontent; and inexperienced youth, deprived of the sober warnings of maturer years, rushes headlong into dissipation and ruin.

Not so those whom we now behold: that royal mother was far too wise to check the buoyant happiness of youth;—and too well taught her child in the Christian lessons of humility and obedience, to listen with inattentive ear to the grave maxims of experience. And as they held their sweet interchange of thought, the elder mind caught a blithe cheerfulness, the younger more chastened hopes, from the sweet communion.

“But we are growing selfish!”—at length the

queen exclaimed, " Bid my maidens bring hither the tapestry-frame : this light, though it scarce sufficeth for their cunning work, may enable even our fading eyes to pronounce on the advancement of it."

In a few moments the ladies, delighted with their summons, had collected around their royal mistress ; and all were soon deeply absorbed in an earnest consultation respecting the claims of the various colours for promotion to the high honour of robing the adoring shepherds and lowly attendants of the new-born Saviour.

" What thinks the princess ?" asked Donna Clara, in the hope of deciding some serious difficulty, addressing Donna Maria, who had hitherto forborne to speak.

" I cannot avert mine eyes from the countenance of the Madonna," replied the princess ; " and am apprehensive that if we attempt the other faces of the group, the contrast will be too striking."

An appealing look at the queen met with

mediate reply. "Donna Inez has promised to embroider the whole of the Divine Infant, which is the utmost we can ask of her ;—therefore we must take courage, my love, and do our best. With such a model before you as that sweet and expressive face, methinks it is an excellent opportunity for improvement."

"I see but one defect," replied the princess, "in what is already finished ; and must confess the star pleases me not ;—it is absolutely dull, that yellow gold !"

"We have all observed the fault, and had some thoughts of trying the effect of silver thread."

Whilst one of the ladies thus replied, the princess had taken the jewel from her dark tresses. It was a small golden bird, whose hues were formed of gems ; and a number of twisted wires, each terminated by a brilliant of considerable size, formed its fan-like tail. "I think I can improve the star," said Donna Maria, and introducing her taper fingers amidst the golden

wires, she twisted one with its accompanying jewel from the costly ornament, and inserting it in the centre of the Bethlehem star, smiled to behold its lustre mimic the effulgence of the prophetic meteor.

A glance of warm approval from the royal parent sanctioned the transfer, and the expert fingers of one of the ladies soon fixed it in the spot assigned.

Whilst the fair judges were yet commenting on the manifest improvement, the large folding doors at the extremity of the room were thrown open, and the thin voice of a page was heard from without announcing, "The Infant."—The words were echoed by the stripling within the apartment, and Don Pedro passing the threshold with a stately and martial tread approached the chair of the queen. As the rushes of that spacious room rustle beneath his steps, we may regard with a more scrutinizing glance than we have yet had leisure to give him, one who deserves our special notice ; and whilst we mark

the peculiar expression of the moment, take occasion to fix his look and bearing definitely on our mind.

Invested with all the graces of earliest manhood, that princely form needed no adventitious aid from the glittering panoply of courts to proclaim him born to rule; authority sat on his broad candid brow, and the power to *will* and *do* in the almost stern concentration of his clearly-defined and arched brows. The usual expression of his dark eyes was a quiet melancholy, though, when the fiery spirit of his race was roused, their haughty glances were dazzlingly bright and piercing. His hair and short-curved beard and slight moustache were of that silken raven hue, that has gleams of light playing amidst its waves. The smiles that dwelt around the calm and well-formed mouth were seldom banished, though often sad,—sometimes bitter; when entirely gone, however, the character of the face was changed, becoming severe almost to sternness. Not such, however, the expression his

marked features wore, as, with plumed and jewelled cap in hand, he advanced to salute his royal parent. A flush of joy was on his brow, and danced in his eyes, and sported around his deep-hued lips, and gave an almost hectic brightness to cheeks that seldom glowed.

"Welcome, my son," exclaimed the queen, rising to meet him,—"'tis nigh three days since we have rejoiced in thy presence."

"Then it is but meet, sweet mother, that I crave thy blessing." His stately form was at her feet, and tears of transport swelled the eyelids of the glad mother as she blest her noble son.

He had arisen and conducted her to her seat, when the princess entwining her arm in his, and looking up into his face with an arch smile, exclaimed,—“What is the bright thought that so illumines thy countenance, brother mine!—some joyous news hath reached the city, and thou hast hastened hither to secure the glad office of imparting it.”

The queen looked grave, as with an earnest gaze she scrutinized the speaking countenance of Don Pedro, who drawing a cushion near the chair occupied by his royal mother, seated himself at her feet ; and upturning his face, as if inviting scrutiny, exclaimed,—“ Read, fair mother ; 'tis a book that hath never deceived.”

“ Nor ever will, mine own beloved son ! therefore tell me what pleasing news hast thou brought to enliven our quiet bower.”

An instantaneous glance directed towards the attendants indicated the caution of a court, and to it the prince replied,—“ Suffer not the ladies to retire ; for methinks none will more rejoice at the news I bring than these fair damsels. Sweet mother, give them permission to hear my tidings.”

“ Willingly, at thy request, Pedro ; but pray compassionate our curiosity, and withhold no longer the important news.”

Every eye was bent on the prince ; and he gazed silently around him for a moment, as if

enjoying the expectation which sat on each eager face; but suddenly some painful thought smote him, for his eyes fell to the ground, and a heavy sigh but half suppressed heaved his ample chest. His accustomed gravity was instantly resumed; and when he again raised his eyes, it did not escape the mother's watchful glance that his countenance had lost its brightness.

"One word will put all in possession of my secret," he said, and paused. Even the queen longed for that "one word;" and the very soul peeped from the eyes of many a demure maid-of-honour. "It is only needful to recall to your memory the last bull-fight."

The spell was broken:—"His highness has found the stranger!" burst from several lips.

"Is it so, my brother? Is he who saved the forcador no longer a shadow, a mystery?"

"You guess rightly, ladies,—the bold champion is found,—and of no ignoble birth, though not our countryman."

"Whence cometh he, then?" inquired the queen.

“ From England ;—it is in truth the very Briton to whose care the Prior de San José entrusted the safe custody of the splendid vestments which he sent to Lisbon before St. Michael's feast.”

“ And how is it that, if noble, he is yet a stranger to the court ?”

“ He is devoting himself to the care and solace of an invalid sister, whom he brought to winter here ; and chose to remain unknown, lest he should be induced to leave her frequently alone.”

“ Is then the fame of Lusitanian charity so low that he doubted to find amongst us willing watchers in his sick sister's bower, whilst he sought the recreation so essential to his health of mind and body ?”

“ Perhaps the offices of strangers might scarcely be congenial to the fair invalid. I need not remind your highness of the extreme reserve attributed to these islanders. But, be that as it may, I was but too well pleased to find the

youth as affectionate and gentle-hearted as brave and daring."

"Then he declines being presented to the king?"

"Not exactly. He heard with extreme surprise of the curiosity he has awakened, and holds himself in readiness to obey the summons, if the king still requests his presence."

"Which he will certainly do; but now, I pray thee, inform us how thou didst discover this singular stranger?"

"By the aid of the Abbade de San José, to whom he hath been known during the whole of his residence in Portugal; for he presented to him the vestments immediately on his arrival in Lisbon."

"Does he display prodigious strength?" asked Donna Maria.

"He must be a perfect giant!" observed one of the ladies.

An arch smile once more dispersed the gravity of Don Pedro, who replied,—“Fancy

him wrapped in a lion's hide, and armed with a knotted club—a very youthful Hercules! his shaggy hair unkempt,—his beard wieri,—his eyes fierce and cruel, and the hard muscles of his brawny limbs standing out like knotted cords!”

“O the monster!” “How dreadful!” murmured several of the ladies, whilst one or two fair faces grew slightly pale.

“Having fairly caught this monster, and knowing the love of ladies fair for all things marvellous and strange,—what wouldst thou say, sweet mother, if I had brought him hither?”

“Which part of thy speech is meant in jest? which in earnest?” asked Donna Beatrice.

“O, I most seriously aver that he is very enduring,—at least for a very brief space, and that I left him but now (safely guarded, fair dames) in your grace's antechamber. Now, as I perceive in one or two faces an inexorable design of overwhelming me with merciless questions respecting the looks, manners, age of the stranger, and a thousand other particulars, which

may be more perfectly comprehended at a single glance than gained from the most careful description, I crave permission of your highness to introduce him into this august presence."

The queen looked doubtingly at her son for a moment, then replying to his arch look with a quiet smile, said,—“ He is of course a Christian knight, and of gentle birth ; but thy description, fair son, might suit a follower of Termagaunt.”

“ He is most assuredly a noble and gallant knight,” replied Don Pedro, rising.

“ Well, we entrust ourselves to thy discretion.”

The prince bowed low, and left the presence : but on reaching the door he paused, and remarking the timid, apprehensive glances that followed him, a smile of infinite meaning played around his handsome mouth as he exclaimed, —“ Nay, it is a most presentable savage, I do assure you.”

CHAPTER VIII.

"Soon as the lustre languished in her eye,
Dawning a dimmer day on human sight,
And on her cheek, the residence of spring,
Pale omen sat, and scattered fears around
On all that saw

With haste, 'fraternal' haste,
I flew, I snatched her from the rigid north,
Her native bed on which bleak Boreas blew,
And bore her nearer to the sun."

Young.

"O let him pass ! he hates him
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer."

DON PEDRO crossed a spacious reception hall, with the wide galleries leading from it at each end, and entered an antechamber where sat beneath a cluster of wax-lights, the subject of the conversation recorded in the last chapter. He was deeply absorbed in the perusal of a manuscript volume, of which there were several attached by small steel chains to the various

tables, for the edification or amusement of those who lingered there, and perceived not the return of the prince until he exclaimed,—“ Well, De Lacy—I trust thou art now prepared to play the hero in good earnest”—and as they slowly crossed the extensive apartment, the young Englishman learned the highly wrought expectations which awaited his coming.

Meanwhile every bright eye in the queen's bower was directed towards the folding-doors, but the silence continued unbroken save by the footsteps of several pages who were busily lighting the silver sconces and cressets that were suspended around the room. The small remains of daylight was excluded, and its cold dimness gladly exchanged for the radiance of innumerable tapers. It appeared an age of suspense to the expectant ladies, ere the heavy doors were at length thrown open, and the voices of the pages again announced “ The Infant ;” now, however, adding to his name that of “ Sir Alfred de Lacy.”

How great was the surprise occasioned by the entrance of the young and handsome English knight, who, with courtly air, knelt to kiss the queen's extended hand!—whilst Don Pedro, standing beside him, beheld with undisguised satisfaction the reception of his *protégée*. Even Donna Beatrice was surprised into a smile of extreme sweetness, and regarded the compact yet youthful form at her feet, with a complacency evidently heightened by the removal of some degree of apprehension.

And Sir Alfred arose, and stood in modest consciousness of the scrutiny of the moment; nor probably, at any period of his life had he appeared to more advantage. He was sumptuously attired (according to the lavish custom of his contemporaries,) in honour of the august presence in which he stood; and if his form appeared a model of manly strength, it displayed also the most perfect symmetry of manly beauty. His youth was scarcely past, and through the thin curling beard might be distinctly traced

the outline of his chin and cheeks, whilst the twisting curls of dark brown hair clung like the tendrils of a vine around a forehead white as purest ivory. The lower portion of his face was indeed embrowned by exposure, but the rosy tint that glowed through the deepened hue of his cheek contrasted well with the complexions of tenderest olive that appeared around him. In the depths of his clear blue eyes dwelt ardour, and courage, and the elastic cheerfulness of an unwarped spirit; and around his full red lips lurked (spite of the demure restraint of the moment) a joyous and heedless gaiety.

After the first moments of respectful awe were past, the young stranger cast a sudden and eager glance towards the circle of fair maidens who were collected around the royal ladies, but it was as rapidly withdrawn. Nor was it unremarked that the hurried and wistful look was repeated when an addition was made to the group; for the news of the stranger's arrival soon floated in mysterious whispers through the

palace, and brought to the queen's bower one or two ladies whom some duty had detained from immediate attendance on their royal mistress.

"In bidding thee welcome to Portugal, sir knight," said Donna Beatrice, "we must regret that thy sojourn here has been spent in such strict seclusion."

"It was a melancholy duty which brought me from my native land, most gracious lady," he replied, in tones of deepest feeling,—“one with which the festivities of a court would ill agree.”

"We have heard in sooth that the sickness of a female relative is the cause of this,—but I pray thee assure thy fair sister, that the positive duty of visitation of the sick is neither unknown nor unpractised among our noblest dames."

"The queen will kindly excuse the timid reserve of a young girl, who beyond her own family (and that, alas ! containing but few members) has never met with stranger faces than the sisters of her convent school. The condition on

which alone I won her to accompany me hither, was, that I would never leave her to the care of strangers."

"Is it even so?—well, we can at least offer up our earnest prayers for her recovery. But next to welcoming thee hither, our duty requires that we express our deep sense of the benevolence and prowess which urged thee to undertake, and enabled thee to achieve a feat unprecedented in this country."

A slight blush deepened the youth's cheek as he replied: "In estimating that action, generous queen, wherein I but obeyed a momentary, and unreflecting impulse, surely they who give it such unqualified admiration, forget that the poor brute I slew was exhausted and weakened by his previous exertions. I fear, too, that a ferocious degree of strength has been thought necessary for accomplishing a feat, which depended far more on a cautious timing of the blow, and the tact which enabled me to charge it with the whole weight of my body."

“Is it then possible,” exclaimed Don Pedro, eagerly, “that another—I, for instance, could acquire such a power?”

Sir Alfred regarded with a practised eye the muscular form of the young prince, and replied: “The sharp and changeful climate of my native country, no doubt gives hardihood and elasticity to our frames,—but ’twould not be difficult, noble prince, to acquire the more important qualities of tact and skill, which will quadruple a man’s natural strength.”

The Infant placed his long slender fingers in the robust palm of the Englishman, and remarked that though not of peculiar size, even the muscles of his fingers were intractable to the will of another.

“I should like to meet thee in the tourney!” he suddenly exclaimed, whilst the fire in his dark eyes sparkled for a moment; “there at least thou mightest not find the natives of the south thy inferiors.”

“Such have they never been!” replied the

courteous De Lacy,—“often have my countrymen been proud to fight side by side with the Lusian chivalry,—and will oft, I trust, again.”

“We would know,” said the queen, “why Sir Alfred withdrew so abruptly from the amphitheatre,—thereby leaving court and city to the torment of wonder and curiosity?”

“Ah, señora,” replied the knight, with a sunny smile, “how shall I acknowledge that it was a feeling near akin to fear which occasioned my flight? Scarcely had my angry opponent sunk to the ground, ere I remembered that I had interfered with the amusements of a people, to whose customs and laws I was almost a stranger. I could not guess at the consequences that might ensue, and though fearless of an exhausted animal, I had no wish to brave the rage of a disappointed people. I have ere this beheld the ruin wrought by an infuriated multitude; and scarcely had the victim of my sudden impulse ceased to breathe, or the assembled populace comprehended the hasty act, ere I

had judged it best to escape from the amphitheatre. It was easy for me to pass outward, the door-keepers being mostly engaged in watching the sports,—and my return to my sister in the suburb of Belem was immediate.”

A prolonged conversation followed this candid avowal, during which De Lacy, with the curiosity natural to a sojourner in a strange land, omitted no opportunity of noting with observant eyes the singular scene in which he found himself. The costly furniture of the room in particular won his attention; for, in a city which had been so long under Moorish rule, it could not be otherwise than that some remnant of their luxurious tastes should be found to mingle with Gothic manners.

Near the queen's chair stood a low couch, or ottoman, so peculiar in its form, so costly (though faded) in texture, that again and again the eyes of the English knight wandered towards it; in-somuch as at last to be noticed by the queen. Its form was light and elegant, and its surface covered with softest cushions of Syrian damask.

The colour of these appeared to have been originally delicate pink, but they were now faded, and the gold interwoven with the elaborate embroidery was somewhat tarnished. Carved mouldings of exquisite workmanship encircled the sides, seed-pearls enriched the intricate tracery of the singular needlework, and innumerable gems were inlaid amidst the silver scroll-work that relieved the carving. So unlike was it to aught else within the royal bower, as to convince De Lacy that a people very unlike those who now owned it, had formed the gorgeous couch that so strangely rested its jewelled feet on a floor strewn with rushes. The queen smiled as she remarked that the eyes of De Lacy ever returned to the beautiful object which had excited his wonder and admiration; and commanding it to be brought nearer for his more convenient inspection, she observed,—“It is a Moorish couch, señor,—and I wonder not that it hath so rivetted thy attention. A splendid specimen it is of the ingenuity and taste of those strange people, whose

talents are lavished in the vain endeavour to render this world a paradise. Thou wilt doubtless be pleased to learn that this was taken from a Moorish palace,—the only one despoiled by Alphonso Henriquez, when, aided by a gallant band of thine own countrymen, he rescued Lisbon from the yoke of the Moorish invader.”

The countenance of the Englishman glowed with pleasure, at hearing such honourable mention of the sons of his own native land.

“I sometimes meet in my walks,” he said, “one or two, whose oriental garb and grave demeanour sufficiently indicate their race; but so rare are these encounters, that I conclude the number of Moorish residents remaining in Lisbon are but few.”

“None remain who can subsist elsewhere,” replied Don Pedro;—“the atmosphere of the faith they have so cruelly persecuted is not congenial to the unbelievers.”

“I have heard,” observed the princess, “that they dislike the almost constant sound of bells, so distinctive a mark of a christian city.”

“Probably,” said Don Pedro, “they remember the bells of Compostella, which, having been by command of the ferocious Macemont, conveyed by christian captives to Cordova, the Castilian king, when in turn the victor, caused to be born back by the Moors, and replaced in the cathedral whence they were stolen. Ah, De Lacy,” he continued,—“many a church beside that of St. Vincent, hath been reconstructed by the hands that sacrilegiously demolished it! No wonder, then, that the few noble Morisco families who quietly reside here under the sanction of the king, prefer embowered quintas* far from the busy haunts of a christian population.”

“But I am surprised, that, surrounded by perpetual opportunities of witnessing the surpassing beauty, and learning the eternal truth of the christian faith, they continue to be a distinct people,” replied Sir Alfred.

“Perhaps the desire to learn may sometimes be checked by the reckless lives, and evil exam-

* Country houses.

ples, of too many unprincipled and thoughtless christians."

To that remark of Don Pedro's, uttered with an accent of sadness and regret, the queen solemnly responded,—“ Ah, when will cease the perpetual warfare between religion and the world !”

“ Never, sweet mother, till man be restored to his primal state of innocence, to which our present existence can only tend through unceasing struggles, and in defiance of frequent falls ! But methinks, if we remember the selfish habits of the Moors, and their luxurious lives, so opposed to the self-denying maxims of the Gospel, we shall easily find the chief cause of the fewness of the conversions which take place among them Yet, let us not forget to bear joyful testimony, that occasionally a glorious instance occurs, proving that heavenly grace yet triumphs over human passion and infirmity;—like that of the gallant chieftain Albarac, who ended his days in those humble cells which occupied the site of the splendid monastery founded by Alphonso the First after the liberation of Portugal.”

"Hark!" exclaimed Donna Maria,—“I have heard that sound once before!”

Every voice was hushed, as they breathlessly and intently listened,—and in a few seconds a low melancholy wail came like the echo of a sound, faint and low, yet distinctly audible to every ear. The prince sprung to one of the windows, and drew aside the heavy curtains; but all was still, save that the moanings of the autumnal blasts were now more distinctly heard. But hark!—it comes again,—more distinct, prolonged, and sad,—it is the measured and beseeching tone of the passing-bell!

Every eye was clouded, every countenance hushed in solemn recollection.

“Let us breathe a prayer,” murmured the queen; “some soul is passing to the fearful judgment!”

The jocund spirits of youth, and buoyant health, disdained not to sympathise with the soul whose everlasting fate was about to be decided,

though all unknown the earthly claims on their charity belonging to the departing spirit. Nor did those royal minds escape the salutary memento, that such a doom would one day be theirs !

The solemn duty required by an all-pervading charity having been fulfilled by a moment spent in silent prayer, the conversation was gradually resumed, and became more general and discursive ; and De Lacy, flattered and charmed by the condescension and intelligence of the illustrious individuals into whose society he had been so unexpectedly introduced, forgot to note the lapse of time. So fascinated were they with the cheerful converse, that all unmarked was the quiet entrance of an aged man, who unannounced approached them. His slight form, somewhat bent with age, was clad in robes of purple silk ; and his few short locks of hair, his long beard, and venerable brows were of snowy whiteness. Time had set his seal on every limb and feature ; and the calm of a

quiet spirit, which nothing terrestrial can disturb, dwelt in his gentle eyes. "God save all here!" he softly said, as he approached the circle that surrounded Donna Beatrice; and every knee, as his presence was perceived, bent to receive his meek benediction. Those who were well acquainted with the bishop's usual mild cheerfulness, instantly remarked an earnest sadness in his look, voice, and manner; and the queen exclaimed: "Thou bringest us, I fear, unwelcome tidings, my lord bishop,—that passing-bell!"

"It hath ceased—and another now entreats all to remember the soul of the departed. On that mission also came I hither:—knowing, too, that the sympathy of all here would be readily given to the young mourner. Thy bower-maiden, gracious queen,—your beloved companion, noble ladies,—the friendless Inez is now an orphan!"

A start of surprise pervaded the listening group. "I had hoped to visit him once more," sighed the queen,—Donna Maria struggled in

vain to check her tears,—De Lacy appeared agitated, and looked hesitatingly towards the door ; and even the marked countenance of the prince grew a shade more pale, as he stood motionless beside the bishop. “ I perceive thou wouldst depart, señor,” said the queen, addressing De Lacy,—“ perhaps thou knowest something of these exiles.” The youth bowed with some confusion, but made no reply—“ We will all join in the office for the dead,”—continued Donna Beatrice ; “ after which, Sir Alfred, we will bid thee good even.”

With slow step and reverent downcast eyes the queen followed the prelate into her oratory, —and in a few moments all were kneeling before the small altar. As the venerable bishop, the crowned queen with her children and attendants, and the stranger from a distant land, offered up their united supplications for him who had left this earth for ever, what heeded they that to them all *he* was by birth a stranger?—

he had shared with them their divine faith, and glorious hopes—and still claimed the aid of their universal charity. Truly this was a sublime and sweet communion—the communion of the saints!

CHAPTER IX.

"I saw an old man standing by my side
Alone, so worthy of rev'rence in his look,
That ne'er from son to father more was owed."

Dante.

THE sun has set—he has arisen again—and is once more hastening towards the west,—but in the interval since last he occupied his present spot in the o'erclouded firmament, a soul hath passed to judgment! O, mysterious and comprehensive words! how vast your meaning! which, were it fully known, and well remembered, would surely urge each child of the primal sinner to weigh carefully the chances of his own immortal doom. Alas! for the insensible and hard of heart!

Oh Time! thou ever fleeting and disregarded treasure, how little do we mark thy rapid

flight ! Days, weeks, months, years roll on—and only when some sudden check in our onward course forces us to look back and measure the trodden path, are we conscious how much of life is lost to us for ever. Happy are they whose retrospect presents little to darken the future—who look back with a calm and unfearing spirit on duties done, and sorrows borne full meekly. Yet, let us think, that each of those calm days, which glides by us with the unnoted smoothness of the unrippled stream ; is loaded for many a hapless being with heaviest woes,—or the accumulated miseries of a crushing and relentless fate. To how many does each rapid hour bring the decision of their eternal doom, and,—oh incredible truth !—thousands of their fellow mortals, subject to the same inevitable destiny, dance unheedingly by the while, unsympathising and unwarned ! O wondrous and fearful termination of earthly things, how little art thou thought on ! Sometimes, indeed, the blow strikes near to our own heart,—our

friend sinks down perchance, and is seen no more ! But *now* he was with us here, participating in all our hopes and trembling fears—imparting his inmost thoughts, and sharing ours ;—and *now* he hath disappeared.—We still speak, but he answers not,—we mourn, he heeds us not ;—another existence has dawned on him, from which we are, for the present, excluded. But wait in patience, ye mourners who linger last behind the grave :—and oh ye who are about to leave—perchance reluctantly—all earthly ties, be comforted ;—it is but a moment of time that separates ye.

Of those who thought and acted, who hoped and feared, who plotted and caballed, five hundred years ago, some were earlier called away, some later ; but what to us appears the time that elapsed between each successive doom ? They are all gone,—and not the length of their earthly sojourn, but *how* the allotted period was spent, affects them now !

Some such thoughts as these, perchance,

were stealing o'er the mind of him, who (on the evening following that on which Don Sebastian died) toiled with staff in hand up one of the bleak hills overlooking the capital of Portugal; and having gained the summit, sat down on its rugged breast, and gazed with meditative eyes on the scene beneath him.

It was a glorious prospect, and the hour well chosen. The sun, which had been all day obscured, had just burst forth, tinging the parted clouds with ruby, amethyst, and gold. The city glittered in the welcome beams,—the countless waves of the glowing river danced and sparkled, as if its billows were formed of living fire,—and the grey peaks of the distant mountains of Almada caught the sudden glory, and were softly blended with the hues of heaven!

The keen air which fanned the embrowned cheeks of the aged man (for at least four score summers had bleached his hoary locks) failed to check the even current of his blood; and all

that splendour on which he gazed, essayed in vain to dazzle his stedfast glance. A green old age was his,—no sign of a luxurious youth in fading cheek or failing limb. His form was spare, though unbent—his hands hardened with toil—his garments coarse and worn;—yet was there in the aspect of the lonely old man who rested on the bare hill's brow, such simple and placid grandeur of mien, attitude, and expression, as painters love to bestow on their delineations of the patriarchs.

As thus he sat, his breath scarce quickened by the toilsome way, he was observed by one, who bounding with the elastic and fearlessⁿ step of youth from the heights above, soon reached with noiseless steps the veteran's side.

He marked the old man's eyes turned with ecstatic gaze towards the declining sun,—and for some moments stood silently beside him, as if reluctant to disturb his meditations. This unperceived companion was enveloped in a wide

capote of sombre hue, which however permitted the glimpse of an embroidered baldric that crossed his chest; its use likewise being intimated by the point of a sheathed blade that peeped from beneath the flowing garment. His plumed cap shaded the pale thoughtful countenance of Don Pedro; but the youth's rank appeared unsuspected by the old man, whom he with familiar courtesy addressed.

"I give thee good e'en, father,—and rejoice once more to behold thee!"

The old man turned, smiled, and pointed to the rocky seat; content with such slight welcome, the prince placed himself by his side.

"I have missed thee much of late, father,—and even now fear I am intruding on thy meditations;—say, if it be so, and I am gone."

"Not so, my son,—thou art in truth right welcome,—and of my thoughts, whatever is not sinful, is free to all."

"Surely in this sudden splendour," remarked the prince, glancing towards the west, where the sun was just disappearing behind a gorgeous range of the fringed clouds, "thou beholdest a type of thyself. Methinks the bright sunset that hath terminated this stormy day, may be well compared to the chereful evening of a just man's life."

"If flattery might be endured, my son, 'twere perhaps when offered to soothe the heart, which because it is aged is supposed to droop:—but attempt not to make an offering so unmeet from a sinner to his fellow-worm. Just!—oh my son! who is pure in the sight of him who judges justices?"

The princely head was bowed to the mild rebuke.—"Proceed, I pray thee, father," he said; "I came hither to listen to thee—not to offer mine own unprofitable remarks."

"Know then, señor, I was thinking as I gazed on yon departing sun, of the sky that floats above a land far more beautiful and beloved than this!"

“Thou meanest England : often have the stately structures—the innumerable charities—the lowly unrecorded virtues of that favoured isle, formed the subject of thy discourse, when we have met as now in some wild sterile region, or quiet valley.”

“It is indeed a glorious land, my son ; wherein a pilgrim may journey from south to north, and ever have in sight some village spire, or elevated home of learning and peace and charity,—hospice for repose and refreshment, or stately cathedral pile wherein devotion can for a brief space escape this world. There too—in spite of war, and the turbulent schemes of princes, and the crimes of unchastened spirits,—purity of life and innocence of manners are found to prevail among the mass of the people. There, more than in any country I have visited,—the peasantry are virtuous and happy,—possess plenteous though simple fare and clothing, and have innumerable saintly teachers spread over every corner of the land, who duly impart to them for sweet charity

alone, the teachings of religion, together with such profane learning as suits with their states and capacities. Ah, bear with an old man's fond recollections, of some of the happiest hours of his chequered existence ! In that fair island simplicity, and truth, and cheerfulness abide, and have earned for it the appellation so dear to its bold yeomanry,—Merry England ! Well may those troops be deemed invincible, which, recalling their happy and holy homes, rush to the onset shouting, “ St. George for merry England ! ” Ah, that kings would ever remember, to fence their thrones round about with a happy and contented people,—no fear then, of caballing factions, or of powerful foes ! ”

“ Alas ! ” replied Don Pedro,—“ how can princes secure such blessings to those they govern ? ”

“ How did the good King Dennis effect such wondrous changes in this very land ? ” asked the old man, with unwonted energy.—“ Simply by making the welfare of the people the great object

of his life,—by never forgetting, that *therefore* was he born to reign,—and that the king who uses his power only as a means of gratifying his own passions, is unfaithful to his trust and unmindful of his vocation. It is a fearful responsibility, that of directing a nation's destinies!—A king stands as a warder on the watch-tower—let him beware lest he slumber on the lofty but dangerous post!”

“Thou wouldst make one tremble for the great ones of the earth!”

“Oh, that they would tremble for themselves!”

“Is it then to her kings, thinkest thou, that England owes her happiness?”

“Every nation must owe at least the greater portion of its prosperity to its rulers,—and especially to the head of all; and though England hath suffered much from unjust and violent princes, yet hath she been happy in those who have constructed her laws; and possessed besides a fearless and unselfish hierarchy, which has at

various times procured from kings and barons, those popular rights that power would have fain withheld.

“The laws and institutions of Alfred yet invigorate the state,—the statutes of Edward the Confessor are still revered ; and, urged by the venerable Archbishop Langston, who produced from the archives of a monastery, the charter of liberties granted by Henry I., the barons compelled the tyrant John, on the plains of Runnymede, to restore to the people the rights which had been usurped from them.

“Yet think not a just distribution of the laws can *alone* bestow happiness, or ensure virtue. People may call themselves the true heritors of freedom, yet endure to see three parts of their populations degraded and untaught slaves. Was it not so with that nation, whose wars Homer sung? Oh, it is because England is so truly christianized,—as perfectly perhaps as may ever be a spot on this sinful earth,—that virtue and cheerfulness distinguish her people! Her pea-

sants are not indeed unused to toil—but it is unembittered with discontent; for the constantly recurring festivals of a cheerful faith, enliven with innocent recreation every season. The bow, often unstrung, never loses its elasticity,—the mind sometimes released of its task, preserves its sunny cheerfulness,—and the human frame, by not being for ever bound down to unceasing occupations, preserves unimpaired those delicate organizations, the healthful state of which ensures a happy temperament.

“The English people too are *well* taught; the degree of information bestowed is not entirely dependent on birth or station. To such as love learning, instruction is *ever* attainable, whatever the rank of the applicant; and many a haughty noble, too turbulent to learn, might blush on beholding the studious peasant beside his evening fire, whose talent some humble monk hath discovered and fostered. Each monastery educates the youth of its neighbourhood; not, however, without discrimination; nor yet governed by

worldly motives. Virtuous tendencies, and aptitude for study, determine the selection of such as are to receive a higher degree of instruction, or probably be permitted to assist in the choir; and from such spring the learned men of every age,—future subjects for the houses of religion, and humble aspirants for the dignity of the priesthood. But perchance thou weariest of an old man's tale?"

"O never, never!" replied the prince, who in an attitude of deep thought hung on the words of the venerable traveller.

"Believe me, then, my son, that although the world abides, together with the church, even in England, (for alas! in this it consists that she continues militant,) yet, in those western isles is found more holiness, and consequently more happiness than in any other land. Yet think not I forget the glorious examples which illuminate every christian country, still less that I mark not the pious lives of thousands among whom I now dwell, whose efforts for the good

of the people are as noble, though not on so grand a scale as those I witnessed in England."

"Then thou dost attribute the envied happiness of the English people to the number and exemplary piety of her religious houses,—whilst these owe to the munificence of kings and nobles, the power they possess of doing such extensive good!"

"England owes much to her glorious laws, and the decorous and thoughtful spirit of her people, among whom some of the higher qualities of the mind are almost proverbial. . Yet, I cannot but believe, that could she be, by some sudden and wondrous calamity, deprived of her countless abbeys and priories,—chantries and hospitals and crosses,—which have rendered glorious the very face of the country; if she were to lose her wide-spread guilds,—her constantly recurring festivals,—with all the holy and chastening influences which spring from them; if never more should be seen the perpetually pass-

ing religious, the very sight of whose flowing robes admonish men to justice ; if her ever open churches and basilics were closed, or but occasionally visited ;—if the gentle and loving teachers were removed, and lordlings ruled the tenure of the abbey farms ;—could such things be, (which heaven forefend !) England, and the English people, would soon cease to be the envy of the nations,—and her seminaries would never more be sought by the children of kings ! The poor would be uncared for, their little ones untaught, and iron laws would endeavour to supply for the lost power of conscience. Men of stern natures and unspiritual minds would occupy the teacher's place, and dole out to the few who might have the means and the will to purchase, such scant morality and distorted sciences as might even be caught from the pages of paganism. The tender minds of England's youth, whether cultured or scornfully left uncared for, would be trained under the harsh influences of fear, or ruled by the iron rod of petty despotism. From such

influences must arise, stern, unbending minds,—low and brutal passions,—gloomy, and unloving, and sinful homes. The power to do, would laugh to scorn the demand of duty or charity; selfishness and hardness of heart distinguish the rich,—discontent and envy embitter the hard fare of the poor,—slavery (that hideous doom, from which the religious orders took the first step to free their fellow men) would in effect, though not perhaps in name, return again; for the powerful and the proud would care only to revel in criminal luxury, whilst unvarying and incessant labour must be the lot of the helpless and the poor. Oh, there would be no joyous festivals,—no playful childhood,—no cheerful old age,—no love,—no unity,—no compassion! In such a state of things, the ignorance religion chased away—*moral* ignorance—would eat into the heart of society, and the lowest and basest passions display their disgusting fronts in open day. Yet whither, oh whither have my thoughts hurried me?—surely such a doom cannot be im-

pending over England!—Oh, if it be, woe to the poor, woe to the weak—woe to old age, woe to helpless childhood—woe, woe to *womanhood*. Far hath my waking reverie carried me, my son; yet, if we may suppose that the loss of her faith and its institutions would produce so fearful a change, surely does England owe to them the envied happiness, which in spite of occasional tumult, and even of the crying crimes of many of her children, is unquestionably possessed by the great mass of her people!”

The old man ceased to speak—and the prince answered not. The shadows of evening were gathering over the city, and, as the bat flapped his heavy wing around the mountain, he started into an abrupt angle as he suddenly beheld those who lingered in silence there. At length the pause was broken: “Thy words, good father, are full of instruction,—and whether thy judgment be correct or fallacious respecting yon favoured isle, methinks one that can speak of it with such fervour must needs be her son.”

"Thou art mistaken, señor—I am no son of England,—though in my earlier days I made a lengthened sojourn there."

"My first thought, then, is correct—thou art my countryman,—and all thy tenderest and sweetest associations of love and home rest here. 'Twas then of some distant province of mine own land thou wert thinking, whilst watching the sun go down."

"No, my son, I think not of Portugal, save to better the hopes of her sons."

"I should not have guessed thee a Spaniard," continued the prince, who appeared bent on discovering his humble instructor.

"Neither am I," said the old man, calmly.

"Then of what land art thou?—where is thy home?" asked Pedro, hastily.

The aged wanderer raised his embrowned and wrinkled countenance, which had been bent towards the earth, and fixing for a moment his eyes on the speaker, slowly turned towards the yet radiant west. His glance was bright with en-

thusiasm, and an ineffable expression of love and hope which lighted up his striking features. yet more confounded his companion, as he sadly answered,—“ Alas ! I am an exile from my native land !”

“ Ah ! is it even so ?—I can well comprehend, then, that thou art striving by wandering on foreign shores to escape its painful memories !”

“ Yet more and more mistaken !—forget my glorious home !—oh, rather be my right hand forgotten ! No, *Christian* brother !—let us never forget our true home ; our endangered but not lost inheritance ! rather let us deem no effort too great which may tend to secure our safe landing on that loved shore—that blessed country—of the name of whose King our most glorious title is formed !”

The momentary light faded from that aged face, as his mild eyes sought the ground. Rising from the rugged seat, he rested for an instant on his staff, then giving his blessing to the

youth whose heedless spirit he had tamed down to deep and holy meditation—he departed.

And Don Pedro watched his footsteps,—firm though slow—as he descended towards the city. He offered not to aid him in his downward path—as well have presented a pilgrim's staff to an angel,—he sought not to pursue him, for he knew it would be in vain.

“It is ever thus,” murmured the prince, as he lost sight of that remarkable form in the dim twilight,—“he appears before me when I least expect him,—whence, I know not. The voice—now grown familiar to mine ear—is as that of a prophet; and whatever may have been the subject of our converse, he always leaves my heart burning with loftiest enthusiasm. Yes, it is ever thus—some sublime hint of Heaven concludes his discourses, and like an organ's note peals in mine ear as he walks away!

“How nobly doth he speak of the duties of sovereigns—how exult in the virtues of mine own grandsire Dennis! Surely that ‘Father of

Portugal' had some such counsellor as this, to encourage him in the working out of his wise designs. Oh ! if thou mayest but strive to imitate thy saintly ancestor, thou also, Pedro, will not have lived in vain !"

As he thus held commune with his thoughts, the prince drew his capote more closely around him, and with sobered steps and reflective mien descended the steep side of the mountain.

CHAPTER X.

"He—
May have man's form ; but at his birth—be sure on't—
Some devil thrust sweet nature's hand aside,
Ere she had poured her balm within his breast,
To warm his gross and earthly mould with pity."

It was a kind and profound consideration which induced the queen to select as the companion of Donna Inez in her days of sorrow, the widowed Donna Isabel de Sourinha, whose subdued and quiet spirit knew how to sympathise with the young mourner. The beloved husband of this noble lady had been slain shortly after their union ; and the angelic task of comforting the unhappy was congenial to one, who, ere the prime of her days, had tasted the very dregs of sorrow's bitter bowl.

Two months passed in the retirement to which

Inez clung after her father's death ; the queen had merely required that the attendance of the ladies in Lisbon should precede Christmas, leaving the exact period of their return to the court to their own selection. And Inez, shrinking from festivities, besought Donna Isabel to defer it as long as possible, and sighed as she beheld the time rapidly approaching when she must mingle once more in the gay scenes which now appeared distasteful.

It was on a bright day in the beginning of December, that the ladies stood together in the bower of Inez ; beside a large frame, containing the splendid piece of embroidery over which we found the queen's attendants bending, in the palace of Lisbon. Both ladies regarded it with earnest looks.—“ I hope it will please her grace,” said Inez ; “ great cause have I never to weary in doing her bidding.”

“ Fear not, my Inez, it is indeed most beautiful ; and reminds me of the vestments so newly presented to the church of St. Michael.”

“I wonder not that it should do so, for by closely inspecting them, I have greatly improved in my art.—And thou dost really think our royal mistress will approve my work?”

“I cannot doubt it—the face of the Madonna and Infant have all the expression and delicacy of a painting. But mark me,—since I must leave thee for one short hour alone, assure me ere I depart, that thou wilt not linger here. There is amply sufficient time to complete what little of this remains unfinished, and yet spare an hour for recreation. On my return I will cheer the monotony of the occupation by again reading to thee. Hasten then—the sun shines brightly, it is liker a day of sweet spring-tide, than one within three weeks of the Nativity. Come,—fold this cloak of furs around thee, and away; the bowers of the queen’s garden are ever green, and will, with this brilliant sun, remind thee of summer days. When I return I shall hope to find upon thy cheek, my Inez,

that same rose which faintly tinged it when I first beheld thee."

"I were most ungrateful," she replied, "did I not strive to avail myself of such kind endeavours for my welfare."

"I have somewhat to say to thee, my dear friend," said Donna Isabel, falteringly; "but perhaps it is scarce fitting now."

"Wherefore, señora?—surely nought from thy lips can be unwelcome."

"I would not wound thee for the world, my gentle friend, yet methinks that youthful maiden never stood more in need of warning word."

"How!" exclaimed Inez, "warning?"

"Yes, and the rather that thou seest not thy danger."

"Alas! what new peril menaces me now?"

"Nay, cast not that timid look around, the enemy that now threatens thee flutters within thine own bosom." Isabel had now no

cause to complain of the absence of the hue of health from the countenance of her friend. "O be warned, sweet girl!" she continued, "for doubt and mystery, so ennobled, are fatal to the peace of a heart like thine. Beware of that powerful passion, which, once admitted, can only be expelled at the cost of many a scar."

"And canst thou believe me so weak as to be infatuated by a sound?—my gallant deliverer is to me but a mere voice; were he to stand before me now, he would be unknown."

"Deceive not thyself—I doubt if thy thoughts have not given to that 'sound' a form far more noble than ever clothed human soul. A 'mere voice' indeed!—say rather it is only the exterior (which imagination can so well supply,) that thou dost *not* know. Gallantry, bravery, piety, wisdom,—didst thou not find all these in the stranger? say not then that he is *unknown*, fair Inez, but trust thy friend rather than thine endangered heart, and be warned in time." Raising her finger with a look of earnest caution,

Isabel glided from the room, and Inez stood for a few moments bewildered and shocked by the discovery her friend had made. Starting at length, however, from the painful reverie, and folding herself in the soft furs, she descended the broad steps of the terrace which extended beside her bower, and slowly sought the spot mentioned by Donna Isabel.

It was a garden of evergreens, which had been laid out by the command of the queen, soon after she became the bride of Alphonso, in imitation of one attached to a convent wherein she had rested during her journey from her native land. From its favoured precincts, every shrub and tree whose leaves wither at the approach of winter had been excluded, and every known variety collected of each species of evergreen. There stately rows of girdling cedars extended their wide dark arms in sternest majesty; and the red berries of the holly glistened among the fragrant bays, the pale olives, the starred lauristinus, and the bright-leaved laurel

of Portugal. Luxuriant hedges of closely clipped myrtle too were there, with the beautiful cypresses of the Peninsula ; and closely growing shrubs whose boughs were bound together by interlacing wreaths of clinging ivy. The garden had now nearly attained its full perfection, and realized the idea of its projector ; the trees having been undisturbed for many years, save where in some sheltered nook young plants of the lemon and orange were just beginning to flourish in their adopted land.

During summer the walks of this garden were seldom entered, for they appeared then dark and uninviting ; but now that the verdure of every grove had been swept away, the contrast was delightful, and the dark green glossy leaves of its impervious arbours glittered in the bright sun-beams with the cheerful and flashing brightness of a rippling river.

As Inez paced the formal walks, she welcomed the keen air that with rude but healthful greetings fanned her cheek, and at every breath of the

invigorating breeze seemed to inhale fresh life, renewed hopes, and returning cheerfulness. Long she walked there, pensive but calm, and whilst slowly traversing the long-drawn walks, her lips moved slightly, as if she had chosen that hour for reciting some appointed office.

At the end of one of the walks stood an inviting arbour. Glad of the proffered resting place, Inez entering, accepted its rustic seat, and marked with surprise that the foliage above and around her was so densely interwoven as to render it totally impenetrable to the eye. A few small birds fluttered busily around, as if half hoping that so bright a day might herald returning spring; and listening to their responsive chirrups, she soon became lost in that dreamy thoughtlessness which is the mind's best recreative after it hath been overwrought. At length, conjecturing that Donna Isabel must have returned, she arose, intending to rejoin her; but when about to emerge from that quiet retreat, she observed a cavalier enter the walk

which led towards it. A moment's glance sufficed to recognise him, and Inez retreated to the farther extremity of the arbour, hoping he might pass without observing her. Vain hope ! the shade of the leafy bower failed to screen her from the keen glance of Caelho. But ere the count entered, she had assumed some degree of composure, and resuming her seat, contented herself with the hope of rendering as short as possible an interview which was now unavoidable.

"Fairest Inez," exclaimed her wily persecutor, as he bowed before her, "I inquired for thee at the palace, and was directed hither. May I ask from the queen of my affections, that patient hearing which I have hitherto implored in vain?"

"One subject excepted," replied Inez, averting her eyes from a countenance on which she so much feared to look, "far be it from me to control the words of the Count d'Ercillia."

"And that forbidden topic, is perchance the one on which my hopes hang," replied the nobleman, endeavouring to soften his rugged tones,—
"the one which brought me hither."

"It is impossible that I should mistake thy meaning," said Inez, rising,—“therefore, señor, I entreat thee to forbear.”

“Did ever lover learn to despair whilst a ray of hope remained?”

“But in this case there is no hope, sir count,—my determination is immovable.”

“Thou art too unforgiving, fairest lady. Never yet did woman believe a sin unpardonable that was caused by excess of love!”

“Talk not of love!” exclaimed Inez with bitter and undisguised scorn:—then checking herself, continued,—“In sooth, señor, thou goest nigh to peril my courtesy.—I pray thee forbear this theme.”

“But I have much to urge which thou hast never yet patiently heard.”

“Nothing canst thou utter, señor, capable of working a change in my feelings,—I pray thee therefore spare me.”

“How, señora, can I behold one, whose happiness is dearer to me than mine own, dependent on the caprice of a court for her very subsis-

tence? Can I doubt that one of thy noble lineage must bitterly feel a state so abject?"

"If thou comest hither to taunt me with my poverty," replied Inez, with trembling tones, "know that thy cruel words only serve to remind me to whom I owe it."

"Nay, lady, this sternness suits ill thy gentle nature; believe me I but allude to that which is to me a cause of unceasing sorrow, in order to rescue thee from such misery."

"I will gladly excuse thine undesired sympathy, señor,—be but indifferent to me and my concerns, and I am satisfied."

"Donna Inez, listen to me!" exclaimed the count, vehemently,—yet striving to curb the gathering rage which her cold, scornful words were fanning into fury, and at the same time interposing himself betwixt her and the entrance of the arbour, which she now attempted to gain. "In reparation of the wrong into the commission of which my blind passion hurried me, I would offer the atonement of a life's devoted affection. I would place thee at the head of the matronage

of Portugal, and make thee the happy sharer of d'Ercillia's brilliant destiny. Is such reparation of a wrong (only threatened in a moment of passion) to be despised?"

"I have answered all this before, señor,—I pray thee detain me not."

Caelho persevered in gently opposing her egress; and drawing herself to her full height, the lady confronted her false suitor with a glance of indignation;—still wearing his mask, however, the eyes of the knight fell to the ground, and though continuing to obstruct her way, his attitude was all reverence and respect.

"Thou deemest me weak and helpless, señor!"
—and the maiden's brow was flushed and her voice firm as she addressed him,—“or thou wouldst not dare thus to detain me!—But beware!—for an' thou givest me not this instant unobstructed way, the queen shall hear of thy bold intrusion!"

A sneer played for an instant on the countenance before her, and the count replied in stern

and measured tones : " Thinkest thou her grace—aye, or the king himself—could prevent thy being mine, if I willed it to be so ?"

Inez now for the first time trembled, and instead of endeavouring to reach the entrance of the harbour, retreated towards its further extremity. Her voice however continued firm, as she replied, " Hence, bold man !—nor think to intimidate me, for did thy power extend, as thy vain boast would hint, beyond that of my royal protectress, yet I know well, that the Hand which hath saved me erewhile from thy artifices, can do so still."

" Hast thou indeed such confidence in that young upstart who looks so anxiously for thy return to Lisbon ? But 'twere best for both of ye to beware ; for the vengeance of Caelho, if thou elude his grasp, shall be a world's wonder !"

The heart of Inez sunk within her as she caught the dreadful meaning of these deliberately uttered words,—and still retreating as her foe

advanced towards her, she strove for firmness as she replied : " Think not by thine own untained thoughts to guess at mine ; my trust is in Him alone, in whose sight all the power of this wide world is but as an insect's might ! "

" Yet beware those looks of cold contempt, lady, for they tempt me will nigh beyond my strength ; nor hope to scare me with the dream of dotards,"—continued the villain, in the low, hissing tone, peculiar to his moments of intense rage ;—" it must be a powerful arm, and that of flesh and blood, shall turn Caelho from his purpose."

" I seek not to anger thee," replied Inez, her cheek now pale as death. " Why wilt thou prolong an interview so painful to us both ? "

" Because,"—and in the struggle between passion and prudence, the latter was fast giving way—" what I came to say is yet unsaid."

The lady had retreated to the extremity of the arbour, and thither Caelho slowly but determinedly followed her. Indignant at his

rudeness, she now exclaimed with a voice raised above her usual quiet tones,—“I know not by what authority thou darest thus presume to intrude into my presence, sir count! scarcely forbearing to mingle threats with thy false vows;—but I warn thee, unknightly noble, to delay my free departure another moment at thy peril!”

A fiendish laugh burst from the lips of the traitor, and as Inez attempted to glide past him, he extended his bold hand to detain her,—but it touched not her shrinking form! There was a sudden crashing of boughs and branches,—the vision of a mailed arm gleamed and disappeared like lightning through the living wall of the bower,—and the astonished lady beheld her foe motionless at her feet! She rushed from the spot, exclaiming—“It is he! it is my guardian angel! Oh why may I not behold and bless thee!” With clasped hands, and eyes which sought to penetrate the thick screen of leaves that bounded her view, she stood without the

arbour,—but only for a moment. The branches of a grove that grew behind the spot wherein the form of Caelho lay, were suddenly parted, and clad in his steel disguise her true knight knelt before her.

“Ah, why didst thou call me?” he murmured in those sweet low accents that made the heart of Inez bound with joy, and suffused her face with blushes.

“That I might bless thee—mine own unguerdoned champion!—that I might tell thee Inez is not ungrateful! Rise, sir knight,—’twere fitter the hapless being thou hast protected knelt to thee.”

Whilst thus she spoke the knight silently bent over her fair hand, but at her bidding arose and stood beside her. “Alas! Inez,” he murmured—and his words were rapid, as if but brief time were at his disposal,—“thy sorrows have been many since last we parted, and all my boundless sympathy longed in vain to approach and comfort thee. But I have ever

hovered around thee, sweet maiden ! oft watched thee in thy pensive walks ;—and when thy gentle looks rested on the leafy screen that concealed me, my heart hath well nigh burst its prison to fly to thee ! But this is madness ! Ah, when I heard the music of thy voice, imploring me to approach thee, what availed my best resolves ?”

“ Alas !” sighed Inez, “ what mean thy mournful words ?”

“ Tempt me not, fairest lady, for mine own heart is as a traitor that yearneth to betray me. Let it suffice that my stern fate obliges me to look coldly on the only woman I have ever loved !”

“ I see it all,” murmured Inez, and tears stole from her averted eyes,—“ thou art poor, like me, —and the will of others is thy law !”

“ Poor, indeed !” replied the knight bitterly, “ far too poor in life’s best blessings, to dare raise mine eyes with hope to thee ! Yet have I somewhat here that may render *thee* less so. Behold !” (and loosening the fastening of his corselet, he

drew from beneath it a thin scroll of parchment,) “by this doth thy suzerain grant thee one-third of thy heritage, the remainder being sequestered to the crown. Take it, fair Inez, and be cheered by the thought that thou art no longer dowerless.”

“This is *thy* doing, sir knight,” exclaimed Inez, as she accepted the document. “Yes! I will not conceal from thee that I inadvertently overheard thee entreat the Infant to procure me this grace. Nay, start not! I saw not *thy* face, though his was plainly revealed. Ah, generous knight! I behold in this act of thine, the only chance I have yet possessed of testifying my gratitude. Take *thou* this scroll,—thou art landless—ah, thou dost not deny it;—well can I fancy thy noble nature wrung by a thousand galling fetters, which poverty can alone inflict. Nay, take it,—I need it not,—’tis thine by a thousand claims, and thou my friend and guardian, mayest be thereby enabled to raise thyself to fame.’”

As the knight gently rejected the proffered

boon, he said,—“How didst thou know ’twas I who conversed with the prince?”

“I recognised thy voice;—ah yes! though long unheard, too well remembered were the accents that thrice found me in despair and bade me fear no more! Could I mistake its tone?”

The stranger’s steel-clad brow rested for a moment on his mailed hand, and a heavy gasping sigh reached the ear of Inez. That note of anguish oppressed her bewildered heart, and she silently regarded him with looks of deepest sympathy. Whilst the knight continued to wrestle with some powerful emotion, the lady noticed that several links of a massive chain had escaped between the fastenings of his corselet when he drew forth the important parchment.

“Ha!” she exclaimed, “even now I behold a proof that thou art the friend of the Infant,—*this* cannot be mistaken!” and with a smile she touched the golden link. The stranger hastily replaced it, murmuring regretfully, “Would I had always known Don Pedro!”

“Hast thou not been long his familiar friend?”

“Alas! lady, my knowledge of him is indeed most recent,”—and his voice suddenly trembled as he eagerly added,—“but thou must frequently have met with the prince,—tell me, then, is he one whom I ought to shun, or learn to love? It will be some consolation to me to shape my conduct by thy loved counsels.”

“And canst thou have dreamed of avoiding *him*?—the model of all that is honourable in chivalry and excellent in man! Little indeed dost thou know of that gallant prince, or thou wouldst not thus inquire. Yet, methinks, however short thy sojourn here hath been, thou shouldst know that he is the pride of the court,—the beloved of the people,—the hope of the nation! A duteous son, a tender husband, and a stainless knight. Even I, stranger though I be in this realm, have learned to revere her virtuous prince! Oh! should the fate that crushes thee now, permit thee on some future day to reveal thyself to me, and seek to win my esteem, doubt not to obtain it if thou resemble him!”

"Spare me, lady!—spare me!" exclaimed the knight in agitated tones,—“some future day!—ah, little dost thou dream—” his words were interrupted by a low whistle that stole through the quiet grove.—“I must away! Alas, thou fair enthusiast! this interview hath been fatal to the peace perchance of both of us! Farewell, sweet girl,—hasten to the palace,—give not a thought to yon carrion,—I will take heed of him. Farewell! Think of me never but in thy prayers,—farewell!” He plunged into the thicket whence he had made his appearance, whilst Inez stood for a moment gazing tearfully on the spot where he had vanished, then slowly returned to her bower.

There she found Donna Isabella, who heard with surprise, and fear, and admiration the strange adventure; and immediately deciding that Inez would be only safe from the artifices of Caelho near the person of the queen, she gave instant orders for their departure to Lisbon.

With the eagerness of friendship she in-

spected the valuable document; and found therein undoubted proof that Inez was now the mistress of an ample patrimony. After the first moments of congratulation, she remarked,—“ Now, my friend, thy long indulged wish can be at once gratified, and the missal thou hast illuminated for the chapel of thy royal benefactress, can be bound as becomes a present to a queen.”

Inez, who had been for some time unheedful of her friend's remarks, started as she alluded to the missal; and thanking her for the kind suggestion, strove to divert into another channel the busy thoughts which clung to the memory of her mysterious champion.

CHAPTER IX.

"—————A chamber low and large,
Of kingly air, and with o'erbranching lights,
From the high ceiling pouring down a noon
Of lustre that doth goldenly bedeck
The costliness around."

Montgomery.

"Now, good Cesario, but that piece of song,
That old and antique song we had last night,
Methought it did relieve my passion much,
More than light airs, and recollected terms
Of these most brisk and giddy-paced times."

"Lips in whose rosy labyrinth when she smiled,
The heart was lost, and blushes swift and wild,
As are the momentary meteors sent
Across the uncalm but beauteous firmament."

Moore.

BLEST Christmas time ! happy, consoling, and
glorious festival ! that by a most benevolent dis-
pensation comest with all thy glowing charities
in the deepest gloom of winter, and ledest all,
from grateful sympathy with the tender babe of

Bethlehem, to remember those "little ones," His own suffering poor. Well mayest thou be distinguished above every other feast, by being named after that Divine Humanity, through which, light and hope beamed on a world sunk in darkness, and suffering, and selfishness. In every Christian region thou art welcomed by all ranks and every age; and the palace and the cottage, the church and the convent, at thy approach put on their festal adornments of green boughs and flowers! Little children announce thy coming with cheerful and pious hymns,—the prolonged echo of that first carol entoned by angels,—and old age rouses into renewed vigour, for its loved ones collect, as in former years, around the paternal board. Plentiful doles, too, are distributed to avert the chilling rigour of the season from lowly homes; for who would sit down to feast on that day, without the sweet consciousness that others had been made happy by his bounty?

Long ere that beloved festival dawned, Sir

Alfred de Lacy had been presented to the king ; and the marked notice which he received from Alphonso, who ever loved all manly accomplishments, procured for the young Englishman the especial attentions of his courtiers. To his own sunny temperament and graceful manners, however, he owed no small portion of homage, and often was he sorely tempted to exchange his lonely and chosen duty for athletic sports and festive halls. But with an unbending resolution he resisted every effort to lure him from the beloved invalid ; little dreaming, however, that to his generous self-devotion he owed his liberty, perhaps his life. With some few youthful knights he held indeed occasional intercourse, but not, as might be supposed from the examples of later times, to lose every trait of human nature in the wild orgies of the bacchanal, or the maddening excitement of the hazard-table ; no,—princes and nobles had not yet watched with breathless anxiety the motions of a maggot, or decided the destiny of church-bells by the fall of the dice !

The age of reckless vice, and aimless adventure had not yet arrived ; though no amount of danger or privation would have deterred the noblest from an enterprise worthy of his prowess. Sometimes the young stranger was observed in the society of the Infant ; and it was quickly marked that the difference of rank and nation did not prevent a daily confirmed regard from linking together these young and ardent minds. Still, however, Sir Alfred shunned feast and festive hall, and only by the particular request of Don Pedro did he refrain from an attempt to evade the command of the king, who required his presence at the royal Christmas banquet. It was held on the day after the festival ; and with far more of painful regret than anticipation of pleasure, Sir Alfred quitted his gentle sister, and attended by a page and a couple of lacqueys rode to the palace.

Great was the contrast between the quiet scene he had left and the one to which he came. Within the guarded precincts of Monte Mor all

was bustle and preparation ; pages, esquires, and attendants were moving across the spacious courts, and through the countless passages, with anxious and excited looks ; while at each moment some new arrival of the glittering guests increased the throngs that seemed already countless. De Lacy, after giving a few brief directions to his attendants, was conducted by the appointed officials to the spacious anteroom of the audience hall, where were rapidly assembling the selected guests. There appeared the fairest and noblest in the land,—we had almost said *the worthiest*, but prefer to substitute—*those who stood highest in the king's favour*. Gongalez was there, and Pacheco ; and soon after Sir Alfred's arrival, Caelho also entered the regal hall. This was his first public visit to the king since a dangerous illness which had for some weeks confined him to his palace ; and as he entered the presence-chamber his sumptuous robes failed to conceal that his frame had lost somewhat of its robust vigour, and his cheek its florid hue. They who were of his faction, crowded eagerly

around him ; others who loved him not, accompanied the rest from motives of policy, and De Lacy was left standing almost alone. This circumstance was attributed by the courtiers to his being a stranger to the Cemeiro Mór, who had hitherto avoided, and of late been by his indisposition prevented meeting the young knight ; but many noted the scornful glance with which the count regarded him as he passed on towards the presence-chamber, and also the Englishman's answering look of stern defiance. As d'Ercillia strode on, the wide doors were thrown back, and the royal family approached on their way to the banquet-hall.

The sovereigns were brilliantly attended. The king was followed by the chief officers of his household, whilst behind the queen, and supporting the train of her jewelled robe, walked her fair and stately maidens ; and many a knightly glance that had flashed in the fierce affray, softened with tenderness as it singled out from among them the sweet face, the graceful form, that exercised a gentle influence over a warrior's thoughts.

As the royal pair passed slowly through the audience chamber, they noticed with fitting word or look, or distant greeting, those who had claim on such high regard; and in particular the king almost paused to congratulate the favourite on his unexpected return to court;—the queen meanwhile welcoming De Lacy with a gracious smile. That young knight, however, well-nigh forgot his courtly manners, for he had perceived among the attendant maidens the sweetly pensive face of one fair girl, whose stately form was clad in unadorned robes of deepest mourning, whilst the dark silken tresses that shaded her beautiful countenance were unenriched by gem or flower. Among the gaily robed and glittering forms around, she moved alone and incomparable; no one who had once beheld the beautiful Inez, could fail to recognise her, although her cheek was pale, and her luminous glance veiled. Perhaps she feared to look around, for near her a hateful voice was replying to the king's condescending words;—perhaps she had descried on the breast of De Lacy the broad links of a

massive chain, which all believed a mark of Don Pedro's favour, as it was a well-known appendage to the prince's dress. The royal youth followed his stern sire, his quiet consort walking on his right hand, and his sister, Donna Maria, on his left.

The wide portals leading to the banquet-hall had been thrown apart on the king's appearance, and presented a scene of unrivalled pomp and profusion. One wide festal board extended the whole length of the vast hall, at the top of which a dais surmounted by a crimson canopy of velvet, fringed and ornamented with gold, indicated the royal seat. Upon the dais a wide and separate table was spread with the costliest garniture and plate, and loaded with the richest viands, for there Alphonso and his more honoured guests, and familiar friends, were expected to be seated ; the selection being made by the king himself.

The canopy that overhung the dais, was prolonged (in less lofty state, and with fewer decorations) the entire length of the banquet board ;

and from it descended, behind the seated guests, heavy curtains which reached the ground, leaving ample room for the passing of attendants, but effectually excluding the cold blasts of the season. The whole was lighted by crystal cressets, and massive sconces of silver; and small stars of polished steel, thickly strewed on the velvet canopy, reflected the glittering lights, as though in mimicry of the splendour of a winter's night. But how may words describe the rude abundance displayed at that Gothic feast?—the numerous dishes,—some, uncouth to modern taste, remembered only by name,—others totally forgotten,—and a few forming still the favourite food of the people. The bold huntsman had been the chief purveyor of the royal banquet,—and the gentle deer, the innocent fawn, the grisly boar, had each bled that those ample boards might groan beneath a plenteous supply. There too was the stately peacock, unshorn of a single plume, whilst multitudes of savoury red-legged partridges, (still the favourite game of the Penin-

sula,) alternated with the "frangaos emsopados*," "peito de rola†," and innumerable dishes of wild doves. Nor were the less substantial adjuncts to a feast wanting,—simple attempts at pastry,—ingenious and delicious confectionery, and fruits in abundance; among the latter, here and there appeared (but chiefly on the table at which the king was seated) a few small plates of silver containing the golden fruit of the Hesperides, then deemed so exquisite a dainty, but now scarcely prized because within the reach of all.

The extreme end of the festive board was unscreened by drapery; and plainly apparent therefore to every guest was the small minstrel gallery, which extended over the entrance door. Its aid to contribute to the pleasure of the banquet was not forgotten, and during the feast many a legendary ballad was chanted by the well-known bards, each voice being recognised by those whom their strains had often delighted.

* A dish composed of chicken stewed in its own blood.

† Breasts of wild doves peculiarly dressed.

In selecting his more favoured guests, the king had placed the Count d'Ercillia at his own board, and chancing to cast his eye on Sir Alfred de Lacy, who was taking his seat at some distance down the room, Alphonso beckoned to a page. "Hasten to yon Islander,—the knight of the iron hand ! and bid him hither."

Sir Alfred accepted the honour with graceful ease, and d'Ercillia beheld, with ill concealed chagrin, the man whom he most dreaded and hated placed near the Infant. The royal chairs were somewhat elevated above all others, though those of the sovereigns were of these the highest ; and behind each stately seat were arranged the indispensable attendants.

As Donna Inez stood in her appointed place, with Donna Clara, and Donna Isabel, (the queen having commanded the remainder of her maidens to join their friends at the banquet-board,) the lady occasionally glanced towards De Lacy, who, seated near Don Pedro, was frequently honoured with his marked notice. And often was Donna

Inez compelled to hastily avert her eyes, for the regards of the young knight appeared ever wandering towards her. His earnest looks—that recognised chain,—she could no longer doubt it was indeed he, although the distance between them, and the perpetual murmurs, that even in the pauses of the minstrelsy were unceasing, prevented her hearing the tones of his voice. Whether it was that her natural temperament was averse to gaiety, or that her mind had become tinged by her altered fortunes,—the smiles and animation of Sir Alfred jarred sadly on her feelings ; and she gradually found a painful sense of disappointment taking possession of her mind.

And now the pause which occurred in the minstrelsy was more prolonged than usual, the king once or twice cast a stern look towards the gallery, wherein those who sat at the bottom of the long table beheld some appearance of excitement or confusion. Conjecture and curiosity, and rising wrath, all however subsided, as a soft youthful voice commenced, unaccompanied, a

sweet and lively air ; the tender treble notes filling that wide and stately hall, even with their lowest tones. Having sung several bars, a mellow tenor took up the melody, and the two blending in perfect harmony, produced an effect as new as delightful to all who heard. Scarcely had the surprise somewhat diminished, when the deep tones of a rich bass mingled with the others, and the lay, still distinct, was intertwined by the three voices in mysterious and linked mazes with consummate skill. Now a solo again sounds forth distinct and clear,—now the voices commingle in a wild burst of long sustained notes,—then a quick eager movement, in which all join, rushing, contending, triumphant, died away in one prolonged and harmonious cadence, that reminded many a listener of a clarion's blast echoing among the hills.

The silence that followed was complete, every guest looked at his neighbour for the explanation of a treat as novel as delightful. Those who were seated around the royal board would have

complimented Alphonso on his gifted minstrels, but the king's hasty exclamation of surprise and pleasure arrested the intended flattery.

"To which of you, my friends, are we indebted for so enrapturing a strain?" he eagerly asked.

"Here, my liege," said Don Pedro, "behold the culprit!" and the prince pointed to De Lacy, who could scarcely suppress a smile at the astonishment of all around him."

"Ha! sir Knight of the Iron Hand! what another mystery!—Is this then an English diversion?"

"It is, my liege, and a very usual one. I have among my attendants several three-man-song-men."

"And how didst thou learn 'twould be found suitable to our southern tastes?"

"I could not doubt, my liege, that any graceful novelty must be acceptable at so glorious a court, and having discovered in my conversations with his grace the Infant, that such harmonies are unknown in Portugal, I ventured to introduce

my people, by the intervention of Don Pedro, into the king's gallery."

Alphonso's high approval of the unpermitted intrusion was soon evinced. At his request several glees followed, and the absorbing attention with which all listened to them, gave Inez ample opportunity to mark that countenance now for the first time revealed to her. It was dressed with bright and glowing smiles, and the clear blue eyes glistened with exultant triumph; for the assembled court was listening with eager admiration to the strains of his native land. Little did he dream, whilst adulation of word and look met him on every side, and the consciousness that his star reigned paramount gave additional fascination to his exuberant yet graceful gaiety, that on one heart his sunny cheerfulness jarred utter discord. Donna Inez had long watched him with sad and serious eyes, and as bitter thoughts of disappointment and regret arose in her mind, she suddenly averted her head, for her eyes were dimmed with tears.

In doing so, she met the earnest gaze of Don Pedro, who had partly turned from the board, being apparently occupied in taking a gold and jewelled cup filled with the delicious Moçao wine from a salver presented by a kneeling page. The prince was regarding her with an earnest look that seemed to read her thoughts, and deeply blushing, she once more turned away. But another glance met her now, even the fiery gaze of Caelho, whose basilisk eyes were fixed on her with a concentrated expression of scrutiny and malevolence. The lady trembled and turned pale, and as she strove to master her emotion, the voice of Donna Isabel whispered in her ear: "This will never do, my Inez!—thy changing countenance betrays an inability to endure longer the fatigue and excitement of this gay scene. Having the queen's orders to relieve thee of thy duty if it should prove too arduous, I have dismissed a page for Donna Teresa and her cousin: behold they are here,—now we may unremarked retire."

The two ladies having taken their places behind

the queen, Donna Inez and her friend withdrew through a small portal concealed by the drapery at the back of the royal chair.

The instant they were safe from observation, Inez threw herself on the neck of her companion, and gave way to a passion of tears.

"I expected this," observed Isabel, endeavouring to hurry her through the various passages,— "the crowded room,—the dazzling scene,—the music,—above all,—" she paused.

"Let us hasten," murmured Inez,— "it is mere fatigue,—in my own room I shall soon recover."

There at length they arrived, and the yet trembling limbs of Inez found rest ; but still she wept.

"I will summon thy maid," said Isabel ; "a slight refreshment perhaps—"

"No, no, bear with me a little while,—it is but a momentary weakness,—and now—past !"

"Indeed ! thy tears, 'tis true, have ceased to flow, but thy pallid cheeks and faltering accents,

—nay Inez, thou hast a reserve with thy friend :
—I cannot mistake these symptoms of a wounded mind. But I will not urge thee, sweet one ; thou needest rest !”

“ Oh, Isabel, never shalt thou accuse me of confidence withheld,—but my thoughts are almost mysterious to myself.”

“ I think I can divine them, Inez,—thou hast discovered thy champion.”

“ I fear me, yes,”—responded Inez, sadly.

“ Fear ?” exclaimed Isabel, with undisguised astonishment,—“ what dost thou fear ?”

“ That chain of gold !” said Inez, musing,—
“ I could not mistake it !”

“ No, certainly, but why fear it ? were it of iron, thou mightst indeed tremble :—but surely thou shouldst rejoice to see thine own true knight wearing in open court so well-known a mark of the Infant’s favour.”

“ Alas ! Isabel, and thou too believest De Lacy my champion ?”

“ Unquestionably !—I saw no room to doubt

it before, but *now* it is convinced certainty. Did I not mark his wistful glances hitherward? Believe me, he never for a moment regarded the gay forms around us,—or if occasionally attracted towards them, still turned again to thee !”

“ And thou doest really believe it was he who in such desperate words declared that he loved me, and hopelessly ?”

“ Undoubtedly;—not, however, that I have faith in his conclusions, for nothing is hopeless on this side of the grave.”

“ Ah, yes !” replied Inez, mournfully ; “ I have no hope.”

“ And wherefore !—he hinted, thou saidst, at poverty,—what of it ? thou hast riches.”

“ Yes ! and by *his* means,—ingrate that I am, not to rejoice in his happiness ! Isabel, the mirth and gaiety of yon stranger hath unhinged my mind,—for, perverse as it may seem to thee, it is not of such as he that Inez dreams !”

“ How !”

“ I scarce can tell, save that only the bitter-

ness of disappointment remains to me, now that I have beheld him whom I so desired to see."

"Well!" exclaimed Isabel, after a pause of considerable incertitude, "how true it is that form of earthly mould can never equal that with which imagination invests its idol! But since these harsh realities have dashed down and shivered thy visionary fabric,—e'en regard it as a dream,—it will soon be forgotten."

"A dream!—ah me! I can rather believe that my love was bestowed on one who hath departed this weary world, than lavished on a phantom of imagination. But enough of this, thou wilt indeed think me a very dreamer."

Isabel shook her head, and believing her friend's disappointment rather attributable to her own saddened heart, than to any uncongeniality in her discovered knight, strove to remove the cause by cheering her with lively converse.

In the mean time De Lacy had missed the loadstar which he evidently considered the

brightest ornament of the court; and took advantage of the slight confusion attendant on the transit from the banquet to the ball, which soon after followed, to escape from the gay throng. He soon found his attendants, and was not sorry when he once more reached his quiet abode at Belem.

As the knight bounded up the narrow stair which led to his sister's bower, the notes of the most admired of those airs which had so much delighted the court gushed in mellow and manly tones from his lips, and indicated to the lonely watcher his unlooked-for return.

"Here I am, dearest Edith!" he exclaimed, pushing aside the heavy curtains, and entering a small saloon.

"I expected thee not so soon,—how couldst thou tear thyself thus early from those august revels?" exclaimed a fair young creature, who, with her attendant, was hastily thrusting some papers into a small cabinet.

"Ah, Edith!" exclaimed the knight, reproach-

fully,—“reading those letters once more?”—and gazing earnestly on her pale countenance, he detected traces of recent tears.

“It is the last time,” she murmured—“the very last!—I intended but to peruse them once again ere committing them to the flames.”

“Why think about destroying them?—at some future time we might both find a sad pleasure in perusing each endeared word; but till thy frame can better bear the trial, why not suffer them to rest unseen?”

“Thou art doubtless right, my Alfred; but let us not dwell on this subject now,—rather do thou give me an account of the royal feast, and especially tell me by what means thou hast contrived to escape so soon.”

“Thou shalt be obeyed, dearest Edith; but first I renew more rigidly my vow to quit thee no more;—had I been here thou hadst not shed those tears. I tell thee, Edith, one sad moment defers thy recovery at least a month. Well, well,—I know I may not chide, so I will e'en

describe to thee the banquet. Yet ere I can fully introduce thee to the gay scene, I must impart to thee a secret. Aye, smile if thou wilt, but, seriously, Edith, I am in love !”

“ Indeed !” replied Edith, archly,—“ and *seriously*, Alfred, for how long ?”

“ Oh, this is no jest,—the loveliest creature !”

“ Just so didst thou look, and so exclaim, when the young Countess of Pembroke was thine idol !”

“ Nay, that was but a momentary fancy: compared to this beautiful Castilian, she was but a peasant belle.”

“ The very sense of the words thou didst use when I opposed to that momentary fancy, my merry friend Bertha.”

“ Beshrew thy memory ! why recall those boyish phantasies ? I tell thee seriously this is no passing preference ;—ah, couldst thou see this sweet perfection, thou wouldst know I *could not* jest on such a theme.”

“ I can well believe thee dazzled by some rare

beauty,—all, save the envious, admire loveliness wherever they behold it ; but I have yet to be convinced that thou hast learned one lesson in love's school."

"What! dost thou think me insensible?"

"Not so, but as yet unharmed."

"This passes my patience!—and if not invulnerable, why not wounded now?"

"Because I behold in thee no symptoms of the passion. Ah, Alfred!" and the playful smile vanished, as with a sigh she added, "have I not good cause to know each token well?"

"Speak not so solemnly, my Edith, or I bar further conference. But I will picture her to thee,—for though I saw her not to-day for the first time, yet methought she appeared more beautiful than ever. Such ineffable tenderness in those dark languid eyes, such luscious sweetness in the red ripe lips whose varying labyrinth of smiles, but that those smiles are rare, must bewilder the gazer's heart. And so unconscious doth she appear of the power or wish to charm!

for amidst the glitter of countless gems, she displayed a simply robed and faultless form, stately and calm, and sweetly sad; her robes receiving their sole adornment from her matchless beauty. There, what thinkest thou now?"

"That thou art surprised by the surpassing loveliness of some fair form,—no more"

"No more!—what more wouldst thou? Who but a lover could depict those admired charms in such faithful and glowing colours?"

"Of the fidelity of thy portrait I cannot judge, but thy young friend Geoffrey would have far more exalted thy idol in one of his rhymes."

"Ah, Geoffrey! would that the random galliard were here, then might I, when I next behold my fair, have a lay to sing in honour of her loveliness."

"Didst thou not say erewhile thou wouldst quit me no more? yet, if thou art indeed in love, I will remit thy promise."

“Ah, no, my Edith, it is and shall be well remembered. At the return of spring I can renew my visits to the court, and with *thee*. Thy presence will facilitate my approach to the beautiful Inez, and may perchance enable me to surmount—but we shall see.” He paused for a few moments, then continued: “Till the feast of St. George, I leave thee not again,—but when that sweet time arrives, to spend it as is my custom, I shall be fain to quit the city for at least two days; for I have at length discovered that there is in a distant village among the hills, a small chapel dedicated to the patron saint of our native isle. But long ere then, the blasts of winter will be gone, and thou, I trust, fast recovering thy wonted health.

“And now, dearest Edith, I will defer till to-morrow the description of the royal revels; a page of quiet reading will best fit thee for repose.”

So saying, Sir Alfred selected a volume from

a few simply bound manuscripts which lay near,
and was soon deep in the sweet and flowing
numbers of the gentle Petrarch.

CHAPTER XII.

Inkle. "Have you provided a proper apartment?"

Trudge. Yes sir, at the Crown here; a neat spruce room, they tell me. You have not seen such a convenient lodging this good while, I believe.

Inkle. Are there no better inns in the town?

Trudge. Inns————

Inkle and Yarico.

ADIEU ye courtly halls, and scenes of stately revelry,—adieu ye bowers where the fair and noble bend over the glowing hues of silk or gold;—the fortunes of our tale conduct us to a far different scene. We turn our steps aside, and enter one of those haunts which vice creates, and continues in every age. In some, only seen where a singular amount of depravity marks a spot peculiarly sunk in the degradation of vicious habits; in others, scattered over the entire face

of a country, and aiding to corrupt on all sides the great mass of the people,—but wherever found, alike dark, foul, and wretched. We must now approach one of Lisbon's low suburbs, extending along the banks of the river,—upon, or in which, either by trade or fishing, its inhabitants found (ostensibly) their means of support. There, contrabandista found the safest harbour for such articles as were forbidden without payment of a heavy duty to enter Lisbon; and to the lavish habits of those reckless and daring characters, was it chiefly owing, that two or three estaglems carried on a thriving business in so small and miserable a lugar.* Their peculiar calling was indicated by a withered bush, suspended above each door, and by the rude benches beside; their polished surfaces indicating that they were at least used as much as seen. Little advantage could either of these dwellings boast over its rivals, all being alike rude, uncomfortable, and in the utmost degree unclean.

* Hamlet.

Yet even in this unfavoured spot some trace remained of the prevailing charities of the age ; for the saintly wife of Dennis, niece to the blessed Elizabeth of Hungary, had here erected one of those numerous institutions with which she blessed her adopted country. It was a small hospice, bound to find lodgings, food, and necessities, for poor strangers ;—and having one portion of its buildings set apart for the care of destitute children. Over its portal was a large crucifix, whereon the Divine Humanity appeared, ever extending His loving arms to receive those who were heavily laden and oppressed !

At the moment which we have selected for our survey of this wretched hamlet, a robust man in the prime of life, and meanly clad in a seaman's garb, approached the estaglem nearest the river. Having whispered a word or two in the ear of a stout, heavy-browed Lusian who stood at its entrance, he passed on towards the interior, and traversing a long, uncouth, and narrow passage, reached a small door, at which he paused. On

giving a slight signal, however, it opened, and he crossed its threshold without hesitation.

He was now in a low room, long and narrow, at the further end of which, a reeking hearth dimmed the apartment with such sudden puffs of smoke as the wide chimney declined to receive ; and the blackened walls and coiling suggested that it was no novelty there. Beside a rude table, on which stood several drinking-horns, and a large leathern bota, sat three men whose persons were effectually concealed by their slouching sombreras and wide capotes. They appeared to have been engaged in earnest conversation, but if so, it ceased on the entrance of the fourth party.

"He is here at last !" exclaimed one, in whose grin of exultation, as he raised his face to welcome his comrade, it is not difficult to recognise the merry gitano, Gheran. "I said he would come !"

The others made no reply, but one of them poured out a horn of precious wine, (the bright

and radiant laugh of which, as it rushed foaming into the homely beaker, appeared far more fitted to sparkle in cups of gold,) and placed it before the mariner as he took his seat beside the board. The latter swallowed at a draught the luscious liquor, and replacing the drinking-horn on the table, said,—“ Well, my masters—what work have ye for me now? I guess you need me, or by St. Jago! I might starve in my wretched hovel!”

“ Well, good Stephano, thou art a shrewd guesser, and not forgetful that we be thy best paymasters. But, an’ thou art not against thine interest, thou art now made for life!”

“ Aye,” chimed in Gheran,—“ even so I told thee, when I bade thee meet us here;—be but bold this once, and thy work is done.”

Whilst Stephano’s eyes glanced from one to the other of the speakers, his features displayed traits which might once have promised well; but the effects of a dissolute life and depraved habits had traced characters there not to be mistaken.

"When didst thou find cause to doubt my resolution," he gruffly answered, addressing Gheran. "Methinks I have never yet come short of what I have undertaken. Ask Hamet here, whether I failed him, when that devilish scheme that first leagued me with your crew was thwarted, and I had to choose betwixt betraying my comrades, and losing my little all. Did I not prefer that horrid escape into the mountains, to breaking faith with ye? What more would you have now?"

"Well," observed Hamet, "we would, in return, give thee the means of retrieving thy losses; in truth, we doubt thee not!"

"Speak, then, and briefly,—my case is a desperate one, and I am ready to venture aught that man may dare."

"O, the scheme we propose is both safe and feasible!"

"So are thine all," interrupted Stephano with a sneer.

"Of certain reward and little risk," continued the other, no needing his bitter words.

"Well, then it needs the less preamble,—out with it, man."

"As thou wilt, Stephano. The case then is this: Our master—at least him thou hast heard of—"

"I know him not,—thou wouldst never tell me his name."

"What matters his name?—his gold pieces are all that concern thee."

"Well?"

"Well,—he hath an enemy, a rival."

"So hath many a man."

"Aye, and like many another, he seeks by our means to keep him quiet for a time;—only for a time, mind ye,—until it is no longer in his power to thwart his views."

"What dost thou propose?" asked Stephano, doggedly.

"We undertake to watch the movements of this young galliard, and take the first opportunity he is kind enough to give us, to secure him. Now if we can convey him in thy craft to some distant land, our patron promises us each two

hundred gold crusadoes. What sayest thou? surely such a sum would restore thee to thy old trade of arriero across the frontier."

Stephano's eyes glistened, he sighed, but as he regarded the dark countenance of his companion a gloomy thought occurred to him, and he suddenly exclaimed,—“No blood!”

“By Eblis! no!—what art thou dreaming of? What good could we gain by hurting the saucy popinjay? We must indeed, if his resistance be desperate, compel him to conform to our orders,—but as for his life, the care of *that* will rest with thee. When thou hast him bound and gagged in the wide ocean, thou must rid thyself of thy bargain as thou canst;—but be careful of unbinding him, for the strength of ten fiends is in his arm.”

“My skill in pilotage is but small, for as thou well knowest, 'tis not the craft to which I was bred,—I question if I could safely steer him to any further shore than Gallicia. Once indeed, I was driven, when I tried to fish off Oporto, into the little bay of Carmarinas, and landed near

Castillo Viejo, where I rested for a few days. Perhaps I might reach that spot again."

"It matters little whither thou bearest him, so he appear not here for awhile—e'en take him to the Fairy Isles* an' thou wilt, we care not."

Whilst this conversation lasted, Gheran sat with wide-extended jaws, gazing from one to the other of the speakers, whilst the third of the group remained still silent. *Him* now Stephano regarded: "Is *he* of the party?" he asked.

"No, he refuses our tempting offers. How sayest thou, Cloton, dost thou still hold thy mind?"

"Have I not answered thee?" growled the deformity.—"I tell thee I have somewhat on my hands,—an affair of mine own,—urge me no more!"

"Methinks 'twill scarcely bring thee two hundred crusadoes,—thou wert best think again."

"What care I for your gold? *that* is not my passion;—follow your bent,—I follow mine."

* This is an allusion to a phenomenon with which the mariners of the Peninsula are well acquainted, of a nature something similar to the "Fata Morgana."

"In truth, Cloton, I never knew thou hadst any favourite passion;—unless, indeed, it be revenge."

The wretch glared on him with his fierce eyes, and a hideous smile distorted yet more his frightful visage, as he deliberately replied: "If so, the strength of every other is collected in that one!—mind thou its power is never proved on thee!"

"By the foul spirit! I would rather brave, unarmed, a famished wolf," muttered Hamet; and turning from that fierce companion (who was at least as hideous, ferocious, and loathly as the gaunt brute to which he had compared him,) he resumed his dark treaty with Stephano.

"And when shall ye want my boat?" asked the latter.

"'Tis all uncertain,—our quarry keeps close cover; thou must aid us to watch him well."

"No danger of his life?"

"Not unless thine own need require it. By the blessed dawn! an' we meant to slay him, we had no need of thee;—but in truth I love not blood. Is it a bargain?"

"Here is my hand;—but how are we to be paid?"

"Half when the knight is captured, the other half if he returns not within the given time; and meanwhile, *this*, to make our bargain final." His words were accompanied with a transfer of some small pieces of silver from his pouch to the horny hand of Stephano. The latter arose, with brief adieu left his dark-browed associates, and by the same confined passage by which he entered, soon reached the narrow street. At the low door he paused; and with downcast brow appeared to ponder either on what had just passed, or on the steps he next must take. As he thus stood irresolute, a woman rushed from the opposite side of the narrow way, and placing her arm in his, exclaimed, "Ah Stephano! what brings thee here?"

"Am I to be questioned thus?" he sternly asked.

"Husband!" her trembling voice replied, "well do I remember, *when* thou first didst chide me for interfering with thy actions! Since that hour

sorrow and suffering have unceasingly followed us."

"Begone!" he sternly replied; "what boots it to remind me of the past? thou well knowest such reflections but serve to madden me!" As he spake, he stalked on with rapid strides, but that slight figure still clung beside him.

"O, why wilt thou not be warned? At least answer me one word,—are all our future days to be spent like these?"

"No, Isora; the blessed saints avert from us so dark a doom! even now I have a plan for procuring mules and resuming my former occupation. Oh! might I but succeed! thou shouldst once more dwell in some distant valley, and have no greater care than to watch for my homeward steps! Thou lookest unbelieving,—but behold, as an earnest that my words are true, here is more money than hath crossed thy palm for many a day. Take it, and go—buy what thou worst needest."

"And by what means are these bright prospects to be won? Oh, tell me,—be they honest?"

“Ha!”

“Do I not know that thou hast been led heretofore to join in unprosperous schemes? Stephano! Stephano! the place thou hast just left is *their* haunt.—Oh where will this madness end?”

“Thou art ever boding,” cried Stephano, passionately, “and like some croaking raven threatening with evil issue my most promising schemes. Away! I will none of thy ill-omened counsel.” As he spoke, he pushed rudely from him her clinging form, and would have strode moodily on. He was arrested, however, by a voice, which in low tones, clear, calm, and gentle, thus addressed him: “My son, art thou a native of a Christian land, and forgettest thou thy courtesy to that sex of whom *she* was one who bore the world's Redeemer? Lost indeed must he be, who will not for the sake of that sweet Virgin-mother, forbear to shew discourtesy to a woman!”

Awed by those grave yet gentle tones, Stephano paused, and as if from an old habit not quite forgotten, bent his stern brow before the speaker. Some impatient thought, or bitter con-

sciousness of evil, the next instant stung his restless soul, for, darting from the spot, he abruptly disappeared. His wife no longer strove to detain him, but for some moments wept without restraint. On raising her eyes, she perceived the good old man who had rebuked her wilful husband, still standing there, and regarding her with pitying earnestness.

Well might a being so gentle and compassionate, behold with sympathy the forlorn creature who stood before him. Pale, attenuated, and care-worn, there were yet in her form and face traces of such rustic beauty as fills with vanity the thoughtless heart of many a village maiden. But all was dimmed by woe and disappointment, and frequent, frequent tears.

"Speak, daughter," said the good old man, whom from his dress she might probably suppose an aged peasant ; "perhaps I may be able to give thee comfort."

"Alas ! I am well nigh hopeless, father ; for my husband is, I fear, lost to all good counsel.

Long have I trusted, that at length my patient love, and humble expostulations, might save him.
—Ah me ! he heeds them not !”

“ What avails *thy* love or feeble words, my child ! It is God alone who can reclaim the sinner ;—knowest thou not the efficacy of prayer ?”

“ Mine have been unceasing,—but, alas ! poor erring creature that I am, they are so imperfect. ’Tis true, I hoped to render them less unworthy by imploring my patron, St. Jago, to join his prayers with mine !”

“ Thou hast done well, for it is the *just* man’s prayer which is the key of heaven ; and how few of us can say that *we* are just. Continue then with humble earnestness to pray for thy husband, and do so with perfect confidence as to the result. I will do the same, and solicit for him also the prayers of others. It would be well also, should the friar-preachers lecture within reach of thy dwelling, to prevail on him, an’ it be possible, to listen to their words ;—thousands of hardened

sinner have been led to true and lasting repentance by their holy exhortations."

"Thy words are balm to my harassed mind," replied the wife in calmer tones; "surely my guardian angel sent thee hither to comfort me."

"Let thy ways be ever conformable to the Eternal will, daughter, and be assured that blessed spirits shall register every weary step thou treadest. To such care I commend thee!" As the old man uttered these words in mildest tones, he turned a sudden angle, and was gone.

"My blessing go with thee, thou comforter!" said the woman, looking after his venerable form; then with a quick step she departed in the direction of her dwelling.

CHAPTER XIII.

"O ! Primavera giovanu dell'anno,
 Bella madre de fiari,
 D'erbe novelle, edi novelli amori,
 Tu tarni veu, ma teco
 Non tornano i sereni
 E fortunati di delle mie gioje."

Guarini.

"Then spake Sir Galahad, "We suppose that knight is
 mischieved, and that he is never like to see you nor none of us
 all; and that is the most greatest pity that ever we wist of any
 knight." "Alas," said King Arthur, "how may this be, is
 he so hurt?—These be the worst tidings that came to me this
 seven years, for I would not for all the lands I have, to know
 and wit it were so, that noble knight were slain."

La Mort d'Arthur.

THE dreary months of winter were past, and
 spring,—sweet, joyous, flowery spring, was just
 beginning to breathe on northern bowers. But
 in the "sweet south" its influence was already
 felt; the leaves were brightly green, the grassy
 meads re-clad; flowers bloomed in every brake,

and the glad voices of birds awoke once more the echoes of every grove. The air grew mild, the blustering winds were heard no more, and the hour of noon was again beginning to find the city wrapt in slumber.

None more rejoiced in the delightful season than the good knight De Lacy, who watched with rapture the hue of health gradually supplanting on the fair cheek of Edith that faint hectic flush which had awakened his fears. Daily her strength increased, and, as Sir Alfred predicted, she had, ere the feast of his patron, commenced daily walks and rides, which while they greatly invigorated her frame, enabled him to remit some portion of his anxious care.

The vigil of St. George arrived, and Sir Alfred started an hour after dawn on his short pilgrimage. He was attired in his simple hunting dress and cap of Lincoln green, and his true sword was supported by an embroidered baldric of black velvet.

The youth's elastic step was neither tamed

nor checked by the rocky acclivities amidst which the first portion of his route lay ; and for one who had as yet seen so little of the stranger-land, there could not but be much in his mountain walk to astonish and delight. In truth the novelties that met him on every side considerably impeded the progress of his journey, for scarcely had one object of interest been passed ere another appeared claiming a short moment of scrutiny or admiration. Sometimes it was the way-side oratory, adorned according to the simple taste of the humble villagers ; at others the distant mountain, the far-off forest, the winding river ; now a luxurious quinta nestled among its umbrageous bowers, and widely spread grounds and gardens ; and now the white-walled monastery spread fertility over some barren spot. Here a ruined tower recalled the luxurious Moors, and days of war and desolation,—there a quiet village collected around its small but picturesque church, peacefully reposed in the midst of a smiling valley.

Every object was tinted by the radiance of the gazer's cheerful mind, and possessed besides the witching charm of novelty.

Having crossed the mountains, De Lacy entered a wide and Eden-like vale, wherein spring appeared to pause, and expend full half her sweetness ere passing onward.

It was so completely sheltered by extensive ranges of pine-clad hills, as seldom to suffer from a northern blast,—soft vernal showers, and balmy western winds, alone appeared to visit the favoured spot. The knight's way lay directly through it, and as he passed its shaded bowers he often loitered, as though he would fain have ended there his pilgrimage. In one of those moments of hesitation his eye was attracted by a quinta of unusual size, embowered in groves and gardens, which, though extensive, were girdled by a lofty bounding wall. No kind of order had been consulted in the erection of the building; and on its exterior surface, which was white as snow, not a single window was visible,

unless such could be called a few narrow loopholes that appeared near its roof. The stranger felt inclined to make inquiries respecting so large and singular an edifice, but looking around, beheld only a distant labourer urging his oxen with their ponderous car, and a few children playing in a field. The advancing day admonished him to check his curiosity; and renewing his walk, he hastened towards the opposite serra, for amidst its rugged cliffs lay the mountain village, and the shrine he was intent on visiting.

According to his hopes, he reached by noon the little hamlet, and having obtained pilgrim's fare at the small estaglem, betook himself to his devotions. Few were there to share them with him, save the inhabitants who were preparing to celebrate on the morrow the festival of the patron of their village. But the aid was proportionate to the need, and as there was but one priest to attend at the confessional, night had begun to fall on the hills ere his last penitent was dismissed with the sweet words, "Go in peace!"

During the whole of that eve watchers were around the sanctuary, and as the silver ray of its small ever-shining lamps struggled with the gloom beyond the holy precincts, many a form might be seen kneeling, watchful and motionless, assailing heaven with ceaseless prayers. De Lacy took his share with the rest, and with them was found by the first streak of dawn, meek and reverent before the humble altar. Then followed the simple services of the day, and as the youth joined therein, his thoughts would sometimes steal away, to dream how every town and village in England was bright and joyous with glorious offices.

Ere noon the knight sought once more the humble inn, and having partaken of such refreshment as the place afforded, turned his face towards Lisbon. As he left the village he observed a figure wrapped in a wide hooded cloak, whom he now remembered having seen on his arrival, and also in the church on the previous evening. Scarcely noting, however,

a circumstance too common in that land to claim from him any particular remark, he addressed himself to his anxious journey homeward. Down the steep and rugged hills he rapidly pressed, seldom sparing time to remark the varied scenery around him, for he knew that Edith would be anxiously awaiting his return. When, however, he did pause to gaze around, he failed not to observe that muffled figure he had before remarked, who ever appeared to keep an equal distance between them. As he re-entered the pleasant valley which had so charmed him on the previous day, the sun disappeared beyond the western plain that is bounded by the Atlantic, though its last beams yet lingered on the summits of the hills which he had yet to cross; but although the gathering shades admonished the young pilgrim that he must use good speed to avoid being overtaken by night in the serra, yet he could not resist the temptation to remark again the white walls of the quinta, which possessing

no cheerful sign of life, lay so still and voiceless amidst its extensive groves. Scarcely had he passed it, ere he observed a few paces from the road, a shaded fountain, on the north side of which a high wall had been erected, for the purpose of screening from the resting traveller the only wind that could threat to chill him in that gentle clime.

Having been for some time suffering from thirst, Sir Alfred gladly turned aside to refresh himself at the welcome spring. A small iron cup was attached by a chain to the wall; and as the knight raised the humble beaker, and carried it to his lips, he forgot not to bless the unrecorded charity which had remembered the wants of the wayfarer. The soft short turf which the bubbling stream kept ever freshly green, invited the weary knight to repose awhile; but remembering the distance that yet separated him from Lisbon, he resisted the soft enticement, and resolved to renew his walk.

As he left the precincts of the fountain, De

Lacy wondered that he, who had scarce in his whole existence known fatigue, should now find weariness creeping over his aching limbs ; forgetting that the enervating life to which he had condemned himself from a principle of duty, had incapacitated him for the sudden exertions of the last two days. Whilst yet marvelling at his weakness, he stepped from the small enclosure, and at the same moment three men rushing from behind the wall, announced their vicinity by a violent blow aimed at his head. The steel lining of his cap did good service in that dangerous moment, and the prompt guard of the knight rendered a repetition of the blow difficult; he defended himself with great skill, and occasionally repaid with a heavy stroke one or other of his assailants. They, however, were not inept, and the vast strength of the young Englishman was chiefly expended in warding off their incessant attacks. Wearied and weakened as he was, he felt that a force he might have derided when in full vigour, was now an

over-match for his failing powers, and gladly beheld approaching that cloaked figure which he had remarked in various parts of his pilgrimage. For the first time since the commencement of the fray, he now spoke, shouting with his utmost strength: "To the rescue! to the rescue! an' thou art a true man! St. George for the De Lacy!" To his great surprise, however, and no small indignation, he beheld him on whose aid he counted, dart suddenly away; he continued therefore to defend himself as best he might, still shouting at intervals, in the hope of aid, without which he felt that he must ere long sink before his foes.

Neither were his assailants silent. "Yield thee, sir knight! we aim not at thy life," exclaimed one who was ever striving to disable his sword-arm.

"Never will De Lacy yield to such dastardly slaves! A rescue! a rescue!" the knight again shouted.

"It is useless to parley with him," said another

of the men, as he rested for a moment on his sword;" his head must be made of iron to stand such repeated blows."

"Come on!" shouted another—"strike off his cap!—Ha! ha! the iron is *there!*"

Thus, prompted but too well, the conflict was renewed; a well-aimed blow left the knight's head uncovered, and the evening breezes lifted the graceful curls from the high pale brow, to which they promised but frail protection against the brands that flashed around him.

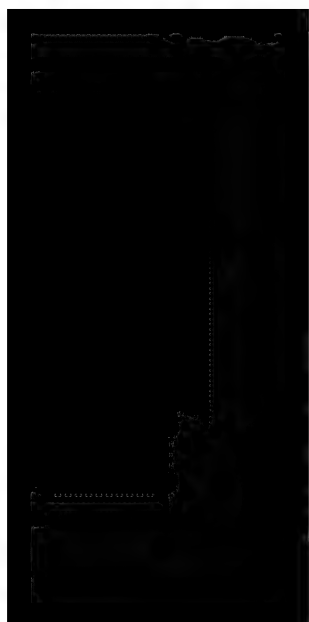
"To the rescue! to the rescue!" again he shouted, but in less ringing tones; and his arm began to forget its cunning, and his faithless limbs to yield beneath him, as faint sounds, succeeded by shouts that drew rapidly nigher, were borne upon the evening air.

"Aid is approaching, slaves!" he faintly said, with an effort to rally yet once more his exhausted strength; "ye had best fly whilst flight is good."

Just as he spake, a heavy blow broke through his feeble guard, and descending on his head,

stretched the gallant knight upon the grass. At that moment hurried steps approached, and the marauders beheld several men, whose drawn blades glittered in the evening light, hastening towards them.

“ We cannot bear him hence,” exclaimed one of the villains ; “ but since ’tis so, we will at least make sure of our reward; so *thus* let it be !” And plunging his sword into the body of the prostrate knight, he followed his companions, who had already fled.



CHAPTER XIV.

“Friend, were the merits of thy nation scanned
From one particular, and thou the sample,
I should affirm thy countrymen all heart :
Stuff'd with such various manly qualities,
That it doth grievously perplex their heads
To find fit seasons when to exercise them.”

THE prolonged and death-like insensibility that followed the fall of Sir Alfred De Lacy was succeeded by a confused consciousness of pain and languor, which forced from his lips a faint groan.

“He revives !” whispered a low voice near him ; and opening his eyes, the knight perceived bending over him an aged female of swart feature and strange attire, and beside whom, holding a silver lamp of exquisite form, stood a turbaned figure, regarding him with looks of anxiety and commiseration. Sir Alfred cast a bewildered gaze around him, but all seemed so strange and

inexplicable that a painful feeling of confusion caused him to reclose his eyes.

“Be composed,” murmured the same low voice—“by the blessing of Allah all may yet be well!—Now,—the draught!” and a nauseous mixture was poured into the mouth of the wounded knight, who, incapable of resistance, was fain to swallow it. Again he strove to look around, and essayed to speak,—but placing the light on a bracket some distance from his couch, the twain with noiseless steps withdrew. For a few moments the eyes of De Lacy wandered over the strange objects that surrounded him, but without being able to form a single distinct idea; for his frame was racked with pain, and his mind confused. Gradually giving way to the stupor which was overpowering him, his eyes grew heavy, his wandering mind became unconscious of suffering, and soon a deep sleep rendered him insensible to pain or anxiety.

How strange were the sensations with which he shook off that heavy slumber! The sweet

melody of birds rung in his ears, mingled with the low and trickling sound of falling streams. He opened his languid eyes, and all that he saw around him appeared the delusion of an imagination heated by dreams of faery. The luxurious couch on which he lay was of the softest construction; and a part of his dress having been removed, apparently for the purpose of dressing his wound, a wide robe of Syrian silk had been thrown around him. Uttering an exclamation of astonishment, the knight endeavoured to rise, but a sharp pang admonished him that he was severely wounded. He sunk again on the soft couch, and for a few moments with closed eyes, and lips compressed, endured the anguish occasioned by his impatient gesture. It passed away—and once more De Lacy looked around the spacious and elegant apartment, recalling as he did so the tales of enchantment so frequently indulged in by the troubadours.

His couch was placed in the recess of an extensive hall, lighted from above by a cupola of

open tracery work, through which the soft air came down laden with perfumes. The whole of the roof was richly gilded, the interstices thereof being pencilled with soft deep purple hues, which heightened the rich effect of the burnished gold. The floor was of white marble; the walls were covered to about half of their height with beautiful tiles ornamented with various devices and escutcheons, and above these appeared a facing of Damascus stucco-work, the groups and garlands of which had all the delicacy and freedom of the most skilfully sculptured basso-relievo.

The wide and open portal immediately facing the couch of the youthful knight, permitted his eyes to explore a spacious court surrounded by light arcades, supported on slender pillars of dazzling whiteness. An immense conch-shell of alabaster, in the centre of the open space, received the sparkling drops from a fountain, which scattered its dewy spray over the shrubs that girdled it with a fence of sweetness and beauty. Parterres of flowers divided among

them the chief portion of the court ; and fine shrubs clustering around the very portal through which the delighted stranger gazed, seemed with their intrusive and waving boughs as if beckoning him to a nearer view of its enchanting bowers.

On the buildings of the opposite side of the court, the sun's rays directly fell, and Sir Alfred noticed above the arcade a balcony covered with a silken awning, and extending beneath four windows, whose jalousies were carefully closed. The most rare and costly plants blossomed there, and several cages of singing-birds, shaded with tenderest care from the hot rays of the sun, mingled their gushing notes with the low murmurs of the fountain. At every survey of the luxurious scene, some fresh novelty filled him with wonder and delight ; but he ever turned again and again to the shaded balcony, where alone he saw traces of breathing life.

As his glance dwelt there, he once or twice fancied the flowers seemed agitated by some more powerful cause than the scarcely perceptible

breezes, and at length found his conjecture confirmed by the appearance of a beautiful gazelle, which bounding for a few paces along the balcony, suddenly stopped, cast its soft eyes around, and uttered a low cry. In another moment an unseen hand slightly opened one of the jalousies, and the gentle creature disappeared.

The incident, though slight, interested the youth, and his eyes were fixed on the balcony, when an inner door of the room opening, one entered whom he instantly recognised as the kind Samaritan who had on the previous night ministered to his urgent need. With noiseless steps the generous Moor approached his Christian guest, and with an accent of deepest sympathy made his kind inquiries. "I have been near thee more than once during the day, but was well pleased to find thy slumbers prolonged. It is now past the hour of noon, and a repast, which on account of your severe wound must be but slight, shall be served by my slaves."

When he attempted to speak, Sir Alfred became conscious of the extreme weakness occasioned by the violent hemorrhage from his wound ;—he murmured a few brief acknowledgments, and was glad to close his eyes and await in silence the promised refreshments. In a few moments a small ebony table curiously inlaid with silver was placed before him, and a simple collation arranged thereon. Some delicious dried fruits, delicate and porous bread, and fresh-drawn water, the most cool, delicious, and sparkling, formed a light and refreshing meal, of which the youth gratefully partook, whilst his host in silent gravity reclined on the nearest couch. When the knight ceased to eat, the slaves again appeared, and with them the aged woman he had beheld on the previous night: the former bore away the remaining viands, and the latter, with the assistance of the Moor, proceeded to examine the stranger's wound. The office of surgeon was chiefly performed by the woman, who in answer to De Lacy's inquiries, informed him that

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although severe, she had hoped the wound was not incurable, since the point of the murderous weapon had been turned aside by striking against a bone. "Heed not the prostration of strength, sir knight," she added; "it lessens the danger of fever;—only avoid exertion and excitement, and I will venture to predict a speedy and perfect cure." The severe cut on his head was now inspected, and after bathing with a cool and fragrant balsam, the attendant made an oriental obeisance, and recommending him to repose, departed.

The Moor would also have withdrawn, but Sir Alfred accosted him: "One word with thee," he feebly said,—“not of thanks, for they may be expressed only by deeds!—but to request that my accident may be notified to some one of the household of Don Pedro—the Infant,—where I am well known;—in order that I may no longer be burthensome to thy generous kindness.”

“Have we in aught neglected thee?” asked the Moor, mildly.—“Thine eyes answer me, oh

Christian!—then be content ;—as soon as thy safety will permit it, I will convey thee to thy companions,—till then be satisfied to remain in hands possessing no ordinary skill.”

“ Tell me at least under whose roof I rest, and by what wondrous chance I found in my helplessness such generous succour.”

“ Know then, O noble Christian, that thou art reposing in the dwelling of Yusef Abu Amir, who found thee last night bleeding by yonder way-side fountain.”

“ And do I address my kind host ?”

“ Even so,” replied the Moor, gravely stroking his flowing beard.

“ Then suffer me to add to my obligation, by craving a most valued boon. There is one, O generous Moor, to whom my absence will be as death,—a gentle sister, like myself a stranger in this land, whom my unexplained absence will distract with cruel terrors.”

“ Allah forbid !” replied the Moor, “ that one of his creatures should suffer needless suspense,

—yet know, O Christian, that the presence of strangers is bitterness to the soul of Abu Amir,”

“It needs not that I inform my sister where I am sojourning,—could I but convey to her a billet assuring her with mine own hand that I am safe, and shall rejoin her shortly it would suffice to calm her anxious mind.”

“So be it, then,” answered Abu Amir.

At his command the necessary materials were brought, and though fain to write on his knee after the oriental fashion, De Lacy completed the missive to his wish. “Behold thy messenger,” said the Moor; and the knight was well pleased to see an aged man, evidently not of Moorish race, approach to receive the precious document. De Lacy gave him especial direction respecting its delivery; and as the old man retired, he made on his forehead an almost imperceptible sign, on beholding which the youth started, and followed his retreating form with looks of intense curiosity.

Wearied by his exertion, Sir Alfred was not

sorry when the kind Moor left him once more alone ; he sunk on his yielding couch, and a deep and refreshing sleep soon wrapped his senses in forgetfulness.

When he again awoke a dim twilight was beginning to give indistinctness to the novel objects which surrounded him. It was the hour when in Lisbon the whole population pour forth to enjoy the delicious evening breezes, and when sounds of merriment and song and bustling activity, make the city resound with the hum of active life. But around Sir Alfred a stillness reigned, which had been perfect but for the low murmurs of the fountain, and the plaintive songs of caged birds. Occasionally a solitary slave crossed the court, but with such deliberate and noiseless steps, that as the light grew dim, such passing forms appeared like phantoms hovering over the scene of past delight ; and that delicious but voiceless abode grew each moment more like the dwelling of the dead. At length the evening meal appeared ; after which, the portals were

closed the silver lamp placed on a bracket of black marble, and Abu Amir paid his brief visit, and murmured his grave wishes that his guest might enjoy undisturbed repose.

But long after he had departed, De Lacy found himself defeating the good Moor's hopes, by harassing his mind with vain endeavours to guess the motive of the murderous attack to which he had so nearly fallen a victim. In the midst of his cogitations, however, the powerful draught, which had been repeated, checked his wandering fancies, and morning had long dawned ere he escaped its spell.

Several days glided on, and De Lacy's wound was healing rapidly; his strength also was returning, and symptoms of impatience began to appear in the eager questions with which he daily plied his kind attendant. Each day Abu Amir paid his young guest frequent visits, and every succeeding interview was more prolonged; for the ingenuous and noble nature of the young Christian, as it became daily more developed, won upon

his friendly host, and banished his reserve. In animated converse was now spent the hours they shared together; the feats of Christian and Moorish chivalry forming the favourite subject of their discourse. Sometimes the knight took occasion to speak of the sublime precepts of Christianity, and was careful to shew his friend that the vices of many professing his glorious faith were committed in defiance of its pure precepts. De Lacy failed not to remark that to this subject the Moor ever listened with cold courtesy; and he was therefore careful to confine such observations to moments when the subject of their discourse rendered them almost unavoidable.

It was impossible that so courteous and gallant a knight should omit all mention of the exalted virtues of Christian dames; the beauty, constancy, and devotion of wives and mothers was to him an exhaustless theme, and he delighted in relating instances of female heroism. It was after one such recital, of deep and touching interest, to which Abu Amir had listened with

averted head and in perfect silence, that De Lacy was surprised to find the Moor made not his usual comments on the story ; and when after a prolonged pause his auditor turned his head to address him, the knight started as he caught a glimpse of his countenance. A livid paleness overspread the complexion of pale olive, which had formed so soft a contrast to his delicately pencilled brows of deepest jet ; and every nerve appeared working, as if he strove with fruitless effort to control some intense and agonising emotion. The words he essayed to utter were incoherent and broken, and at length muttering an apology, of which Sir Alfred only caught the words " sudden pain," the Moor hastily arose, and with a pace contrasting strangely with his usual stately movements, hurried from the room.

De Lacy was confounded—had he aroused some of the Moor's bitterest prejudices ?—No,—even the subject of religion had failed to move his equable temperament. After long perplex-

ing his mind with innumerable attempts to explain that sudden manifestation of feeling in one whose nature had hitherto appeared mild, sad, and apathetic, he recalled the history he had just narrated, and decided that the cause of his host's emotion must be involved in some of the most intense sympathies of our common nature.

CHAPTER XV.

“This same Moor,
Has one fair daughter ;—beauty’s paragon !”

Much fayrer than the former was that roome,
And richlier by many parts arrayed ;
For not with arras made in painefull loome,
But with pure gold it all was overlayd,
Wrought with wild antics which their follies playd,
In the rich metal, as they living were.”

It was noon of the second day after the incident mentioned in the last chapter. Sir Alfred still lay in the saloon of Abu Amir, and the impatience of his nature, contending against his better judgment, was on the point of inducing him to venture on a walk under the arcade which surrounded the court; for on its ceaseless fountain he grew weary of gazing. He had half raised himself for that purpose when the aged female who had daily dressed his wound entered, and guessing his intention from his attitude, hastened

towards him with uplifted hands and deprecating looks, and insisted on his resuming his recumbent posture.

When after removing the dressing, she, as usual, reported favourably of the state of his wound, his now customary inquiry followed:—
“But when, my good friend, dost thou promise me a cure?—I already yearn for my accustomed habits.”

“Be patient, be patient, O stranger! my master wearies not of his hospitality, though Allah knows it is not his wont to endure even his own race and his own kin around him, much less to brook the haughty glance of the barbarian. But content thee, good youth; it was but at yesterday's sunset that Abu Amir called me to him, and bade me be diligent in ministering to thy wants; ‘for, Houadir,’ said he, ‘the Christian youth is gentle and courteous; and, by the soul of my sire! I love him well.’—I would have told him, O youth, that the lion of Zaareh is passive when he faints beneath his wounds, but

I forbore, and he continued: "Who knows, O Houadir—Allah Akbar! God is great!—who knows but this youth may one day abjure his false faith, and receive the teachings of the prophet of Mecca?"

De Lacy with a sudden start half arose from his couch, and regarded the astonished matron with indignation and horror.

"O Allah!" she exclaimed, "avert from me those flashing eyes; a moment since thy glance was soft as that of the tender-eyed gazelle, and now the summer's lightning is not more terrible. Forbear, sir knight,—I know thy stubborn race too well, and have no such hopes; but I said nothing."

The youth sank back on his couch, half ashamed of his momentary fury; and since to rise was pronounced a certain means of retarding recovery, he prevailed on the kind matron to have his couch borne to the portal of the saloon, in order that he might enjoy the nearest possible approach to freedom.

Leaving her patient in perfect ease, and somewhat more resigned to the monotony of his splendid prison, Houadir walked with steps more slow than stately through several long galleries, and up a winding and narrow staircase. Another lengthened passage led her to a door by which she entered an elegant apartment; but long usage having rendered her familiar with it, she beheld without pause or attention its luxurious and tasteful splendour. Richest silks of Damascus hung around the lofty walls, which were surmounted by arabesque paintings, alternated with fantastic gildings of exquisite brilliancy and freshness. The ceiling of cedar-wood was, from its loftiness and vaulted form, almost lost in the dim twilight admitted by the veiled windows, but around it Arabic inscriptions were delicately traced in most brilliant hues. Upon the floor, which was faced with Moorish tiles of various strange devices, ottomans of costliest stuffs were indiscriminately placed, and on a raised

divan stood a magnificent couch enriched with gems. Four windows with their light embellishments occupied the whole of one wall, and before them jalousies were so drawn as to exclude the sun, yet admit the greatest possible degree of air. As in passing through this luxurious room the matron paused to arrange more carefully its light screens, her eye fell on the opposite side of the court, where lay the wounded knight; and with a commiserating sigh she muttered: "Ah, poor youth!—what a pity 'tis a barbarian!"

Turning from the window, she now approached a door opposite that by which she entered the saloon, and in another moment stood within the sacred zenana,—the mirador, or Moorish boudoir.

Into this chamber the light fell tenderly from above through the lantern of a dome surmounting the cedar roof, which appeared to have been wrought and tinted by fairy hands. Around it were

intermingled the fanciful traceries of the brilliant Arabic painters, the tougra or monogram of the sovereign's name, and various poetic inscriptions in Cufic and Arabic characters ; favourite texts from the Koran being dexterously interwoven with all. The floor was paved with mosaics in innumerable fantastic and geometrical forms, and the walls minutely inlaid with cedar and sandal wood ; the delicate tintings of azure, vermilion, and other brilliant colours, being relieved by gilding.

Tall windows cut in walls of great thickness overlooked a flower-decked balcony, and a small garden whence a fountain threw its sparkling jets high into the air. The silken curtains were partly withdrawn, for the sun's rays were averted from the bower, and the air that came freely in owed its freshness to the fountains among which it had won its way through the surrounding Eden. No sound but of the lowest and sweetest kind was heard, and the bliss of a southern clime

seemed here attained, in the undisturbed enjoyment of a pure air and inolent repose.

The hour of the siesta was scarcely past, but as Houadir entered the mirador, a young Moorish girl arose from an ottoman on which she had taken her noontide repose. She gazed languidly for a moment at the half-veiled window, through which the spray of the fountain appeared, dancing at a great height from its marble basin, and observed the flowers that bloomed on the balcony beginning to bend as the rising breeze swept over them.

"The sultry noon is past!" exclaimed the maiden in tones of liquid sweetness, as she sprung from her couch. Her light foot scarcely touching the marble floor, she stepped into the balcony, and bending her swan-like neck over the shaded garden, inhaled the fragrance of innumerable flowers which thus saluted one as lovely and pure as themselves. "Behold! my Houadir, the sun's rays fall aslant on the terrace and groves below!—let us leave these dull walls!"

"Not yet, fair Azayda; not yet," responded the matron.

"Ah, wherefore?"

"The sun is too fervid to be allowed to visit that brow, he hath still a high place in the heavens." As the wise Houadir thus spoke, she leaned on the extreme corner of the balcony, and caught a hot glance from the "day-god," which well-nigh blinded her. "Ha!"—she exclaimed, "did I not say the sun was yet too fierce!—now am I as dark as a cavern in the heart of the serras!"

"Alas!" exclaimed Azayda, as with child-like tenderness she took the hand of the matron from her eyes, "dearest Houadir, thou art weeping!"

"No, not so, my peri! but in truth I had rather thou badest me peel all the garlic in Estremadura than tell thee again how high the sun is."

Without reply, the maiden led her back into

the mirador,—in the softened light of which her sight was gradually restored,—content to defer awhile the nearest approach to liberty that was allowed her. Meanwhile she reclined indolently on a couch which her attendant placed for her near the window, and watched the birds that rushing past on delighted wings, cared not to give even a passing greeting to the caged warblers of the balcony, but unenvious of their gilded captivity, swiftly rejoined their free companions in the air.

“Methinks I am but as one of mine own caged birds,” murmured the young girl; “see how their glistening eyes follow those wildlings that flit so gaily by,—perhaps they long to join them, and gather their food where it listeth them.”

“Allah remove from thee such thoughts! have I not told thee of the dangers of the world?—of cruel robbers and tyrants?—of hardships and poverty?”—and Houadir raised her hands and eyes in horror.

“Thou didst once show me through a window in another part of this quinta, a group of maidens returning to their homes. I have not forgotten how gladsome were their faces, how sprightly their gestures,—nay their voices (for thou knowest the sound came up from the valley like the music of silver bells) were full of joy and harmony. Why cannot I wander forth like one of those?”

“Ah me! my Azayda, it was all owing to that wayward will of thine, which ever refuseth all control, and in defiance of my expostulations, that thou didst climb up to the window: I said evil would come of it! But couldst thou imagine half the cares of those miserable villagers—their poor and narrow homes, their vile garments, their humble fare, their joyless lives, spent in labour and privation, thou wouldst rather bless Allah that he hath given thee an abode which rivals the bowers of the houris.”

“But one might ramble sometimes beyond these enclosures without quitting them for ever.”

“ And have thy delicate complexion ruined by the fierce sun and driving wind ? Would thou hadst been sufficiently nigh those damsels who excited thy envy, the very sight of their embrowned skins would have given thee a disgust of thy new fancy.”

“ But surely the Christian ladies are not so disfigured, yet I have heard thee say they are almost as free as their lords.”

“ Ah, more be their shame,—but as regards their appearance I know nothing ;—only this I know, that he was wise who said, ‘ Let your windows open only into the gardens of your dwelling, so shall peace and content reign unshaken within !’ Ah me, ah me, most unwise Abu Amir, to let the shadow of the unbeliever darken thy walls ! Thou hast brought the vulture to the nest of the meek dove,—the tiger to the lair of the too fearless gazelle,—and evil will come of it—evil will come of it !”

The matron looked significantly at the young Azayda as she spoke, but the latter, surprised at

her words, exclaimed, "Why blamest thou my father, O Houadir?"

"Alas! I warned him; but he would not be warned: I said, 'evil will follow,' but he only stroked his beard, and replied, 'It is written!' As though it *could* have been destined that the young barbarian should be cherished in the courts of the believer! 'Tis indeed a fair youth, and courteous,—though somewhat hasty withal,—but, O, Allah knoweth, evil will come of it!"

"Thy words are dark and mysterious as the sayings of the sages,—what mean ye? who is fair?"

"What matters it, save 'tis a vile Christian?—ask me no more, I pray thee."

"Of what art thou speaking?" asked Azayda, rising from her couch with a gesture of impatience.

"Nay, an' thou wilt know, blame me not for having told thee."

"Answer me this instant,—to what art thou alluding?"

“Oh 'tis a hateful creature!—a Christian knight!—a vile creature, fair Azayda! Wonderful! is it not, that so strict a Mussulman as Yusef Abu Amir should have brought him into his own house? But I told him——”

“A knight here?—a Christian knight in this house?—where?” exclaimed Azayda.—“O how I should like to behold him,—for in reading the poems of Hamet Habez, I am at a loss for an idea of the cruel and fierce barbarians.”

“See him! oh 'tis impossible,—the hall of Abu Amir hath no hanging gallery; for he, alas! hath neither harem whom it might avail, nor guests, in truth, for bright eyes to see. Besides, even such privilege is not permitted to youthful maiden;—be content with thy zenana.”

“In my father's hall!—rest he there?”

“Aye, aye, but——”

Azayda paused not to listen to her further remarks, but bounding into the outer apartment,

stood beside one of its windows ere the deliberate step of the matron had quitted the bower.

“Stop! stop!” exclaimed the latter,—thy father bade me request thee not to quit the mirador; I was just about to say so.—Ah thus it is! wilful ever!” and as Houadir could not prevent the sin of her young mistress, she at least shared it with her, and peeped through the jalousies with right good will. But Azayda was not even aware that her monitor was beside her, nor had heard a syllable of her last words. All her senses were concentrated in her eyes, which regarded the young English knight as he reclined on the couch that had been drawn, according to his wish, to the portal of the hall. Excepting her father, a few slaves, and an aged Portuguese who cultivated her garden, Azayda had never beheld the form of man; astonishment therefore predominated in her mind, for the stranger was neither of swart nor wrinkled feature, and the loose curls of his dark brown

hair clung around a brow more ample than Abu Amir's, and nearly as white as her own."

"Is this one of the barbarians?" exclaimed Azayda, at length; "he looks not fierce—he cannot be cruel! Is this one of those knights of whom I read, so stern and wild, and barbarous?"

"That is my chief surprise," replied Houadir; "I swear to thee, that when by the command of Abu Amir, I dressed his wound, I beheld an arm and shoulder, powerful indeed in broad and wriery muscles, but as white as thine own fair hand!" And Houadir opened wide her small dark eyes, as she pointed to the taper fingers that yet held the parted jalousies.

Azayda replied not, but continued with unabated curiosity to regard the unconscious warrior, who on a sudden rousing from his attitude of deep reflection, gazed with inquisitive eyes on the very spot whence he was undergoing so critical a survey. Azayda instinctively drew her slight veil over her blushing face, forgetting

in the surprise of the moment that she was perfectly screened from observation.

“What eyes!” exclaimed Houadir.

“No star could be more brilliant!”—murmured Azayda.

“They are not dark like thine, nor do they resemble those of Manuel, still less thy father’s—but of the colour of this tracery,”—and the matron pointed to the lapis lazuli; the deep tints of which were introduced in the embellishments around the window.

Azayda followed for an instant the gesture of her monitor, but returned again to the contemplation of the strange and beautiful form, which, though pallid from recent sufferings, displayed the glorious symmetry of youth, on which she had never gazed before. She at length reluctantly obeyed the earnest entreaty of Houadir, who as a consciousness of imprudence obtained possession of her mind, besought her young mistress to defer no longer her intended visit to the plaisaunce. With unwonted silence

Azayda led the way thither, and as they stepped on the turfed terrace, a gentle favourite sprang from a shaded nook where he had slept during the noontide heats, and thrusting his fawn-like head into her hand, looked up in her face with his dark melting eyes, as if soliciting the wonted caress. It was the gazelle which Sir Alfred had beheld on the balcony. His delicate limbs were encircled by small silver bells, and around his taper neck was a collar of aloe seeds, joined by a small plate of silver with clasped ends. The graceful creature bounded beside and around his mistress, as she strolled amid the cool and fragrant arcades; now cropping the short turf on which they walked,—now looking at the fair young girl with wistful eyes, as if wondering at the unwonted slowness of her steps.

Houadir walked yet more slowly behind her, and at length tired of attending her charge, sat down in one of the coolest arbours, and as was her usual custom, gravely waited until

Azayda having perambulated her confined domain, should reach again the spot where they parted.

As the maiden continued her walk, she perceived beside a bower, over which he was training a rose of peculiar beauty, an aged man whose mild and gentle word had oft arrested her vagrant thoughts, and stirred with solemn reflections the depths of her untutored mind. He made the customary salutation of respect as the lady approached, who, pausing, watched him in silence for a few moments at his humble employment.

“Thou hast frequently.” at length she said, —“thou hast very often bade me, O Manuel, acquire a habit of reflecting on all that passes around me, and promised me that I might thereby learn all the science of the sages.”

“I said, fair damsel, that only by reflection can the truths of the Most High become implanted in our heart, and bring forth the blessed fruits of patience, fortitude, and obedience. Well do

I know that thou hast never learned the meaning of these words, for luxury and indulgence surround thee, and thou hast but to murmur a wish and it is gratified. But I also know that without well understanding, and carefully practising these, and many such virtues, the heavenly mansions of which I told thee ere-while, will be barred against thee for ever !”

“ I have hitherto thought little of thy words, good Manuel, for I have been taught that with this life my being ends ; but tell me once more of those glorious hopes, to which mine ear hath been as yet incredulous ;—methinks I have this day found that they from whom I have gathered all I know may be themselves deceived.” So speaking, she motioned the old man to seat himself on the mossy turf ; he with glad eyes deferred his occupation, and obeyed ; and resting on the bank which surrounded the interior of the harbour, Azayda continued : “ I remember well when first thy honied words struck my thoughtless mind, I was found by thee admiring

the delicate flower which is succeeded by the beautiful peach, and thou didst explain to me its nature, and the mode of its growth. Arising from that humble subject to the Great Cause of all, thou didst delight me with the most magnificent images, spreading a boundless prospect before my awakened mind. But growing bewildered in endeavouring to make thy words accord with all I had heard before, I confess that I suffered indolence to deprive me of the fruit of thy instruction. Often since that time have thy words awakened in my heart sympathies of which I had never dreamed before, but the same weakness ever rendered the impression but a transient one. Speak again, O Manuel ; a pensive thoughtfulness oppresses me, which may perhaps aid thy teachings."

With a gentle voice, and attitude of lowly reverence,—not for the being he addressed, but for the subject on which he spoke,—the slave (for such he was) related in brief and simple words the history of the creation, and primal

fall. He described the state of mankind after that fatal sin, and representing the antediluvian world, made a comparison between its vices, and the luxurious indolence and selfishness of Moorish manners. The veins of the young girl were chilled with horror, and her cheeks bathed with tears, when she listened to the description of the dreadful consequence of that voluptuousness and crime ; and even the Promise, and the radiant bow, scarce sufficed to end her sorrows for a world destroyed.

The aged teacher now proceeded to repeat the Promises from Abraham downwards, that, like a golden chain, the commencement of which cheered the hearts of the first guilty pair ere they left their beloved Eden, continued adding link to link, until in the person of the Baptist it pointed out the Messiah.

There he paused,—and raising to his pupil his tranquil eyes, beheld with perfect rapture her earnest look of humble inquiry. “Go on, for the love of Allah !” she exclaimed ;

"thy words fill my soul with wonder and reverence."

"Let this suffice, daughter," he replied; "perhaps I have already told thee more than thou wilt remember."

"Fear not, O Manuel,—thy words are to my heart as a precious balsam,—they are to my thirsty soul, sweet and refreshing as the waters of Avellanos! I promise thee I will recall them frequently, therefore pray continue thy teaching."

"It is enough, fair Azayda," replied the old man, rising; "if, when next we meet, I find what thou hast heard, retained, I will impart to thee fourfold; but now, *I* must resume my labours, and *thou* thine evening exercise."

There was ever a quiet dignity in the aged slave, which the wayward will of Azayda, though so unaccustomed to contradiction, could not resist. She looked irresolute for a moment, then subdued by his majestic though

gentle looks, silently glided with her mute attendant into the further recesses of the garden.

CHAPTER XVI.

" Again she smiled, aye much and brightly smiled,
But 'twas a lustre strange, unreal, wild ;
And when she sung to her lute's touching strain,
'Twas like the notes, half ecstasy, half pain,
The bulbul utters ere her soul depart,
When vanquished by some minstrel's powerful art,
She dies upon the lute whose sweetness broke her heart."

Moore.

It was a great joy to De Lacy, when after two days' absence, Yusef Abu Amir once more visited him. His manner was as usual, grave and courteous, no change therein reminding his guest of the manner of their parting. After congratulating the knight on his evident approach to convalescence, he gradually engaged him in a conversation intended for his amusement, and found in his lively sallies ample compensation for his kindness. As they conversed, the grave feature

of Abu Amir sometimes relaxed, and his serious brow for a moment unbent; and De Lacy fancied that his dark eye brightened under the influence of their cheerful intercourse. With deepest interest the young Christian studied the fine countenance of his generous host, over which a shade of deep melancholy usually rested. His features were noble and delicately formed, and their expression mingled of sensibility and intelligence. The smile that so rarely illuminated them was particularly gentle and benevolent; and the thought that some sad remembrance cast a gloom over his existence, pressed almost painfully on De Lacy's mind.

"Thy dwelling is a fairy palace," he remarked, as a pause occurred in their conversation; "the moment when, lit up by the evening sun, these arcades, and flowers, and fountains, first met my bewildered sight, will never be effaced from my memory. In another respect, however, even more than by its singular beauty, doth this mansion fill me with astonishment." He paused,

but the Moor silently awaited his further remarks. "In the abodes I have hitherto visited during my sojourn in this beautiful land, (so full of novelties for an inhabitant of a northern clime,) the halls and antechambers have been crowded with retainers, and the sounds of melody or the hum of excitement have rung through their vaulted roofs. Here, however, in this delicious quinta whose luxurious saloons surpass the palaces of kings, some silent magic appears to have set its mystic seal on the very air; the songs of birds, the low murmur of the fountain, indeed salute mine ear,—but I listen in vain for the cheerful sound of human voices, the quick steps of passing domestics, or the bustle of active life. May a stranger, to whom his fellow man, of whatever clime or creed, is but a scion of the great human family,—and who, visiting distant lands, finds nothing there so interesting as the usages and customs of its people,—may he know, O generous Moor, if it is the custom of thy race to thus seclude themselves in a hushed and splendid solitude?"

For a few moments the eyes of Abu Amir were rivetted on the floor, and a slight tremor agitated his delicately curved lip ; then raising his melancholy eyes, and gazing earnestly on the young Christian, whose open brow appeared the throne of candour and generous confidence :—
“Know, O Christian!” he replied, “that the dwellings of the Moslem are not as mine, over whose hearth the angel of destruction hath passed, and robbed my youth and manhood of their gladness and glory !” The voice of the Moor slightly trembled, but what his features lost of their usual calm dignity, they gained in feeling as he continued : “There were days, O stranger !—ah! never can I forget them, though long since past for ever !—when solitude was unknown in these gay saloons, and the courts of my dwelling re-echoed with the sounds of music and of song. Yes, oft hath the feast been spread in this silent hall, and the friends of my youth reclined around me, whilst the minstrels chanted the stirring tales of Moorish chivalry. Alas !

the hopes of my youth are as the withered roses of a land that hath been ravaged by the destroyer ; and but for one fragile tie, I could wish Allah to terminate an existence which is a burthen to the soul of Abu Amir." He paused for a moment, then replying to De Lacy's intreaty that his idle observation might not revive painful memories, he continued : " Thine eyes glisten with the dew of sympathy, young Giaour ; and if my history may warn thy inconsiderate youth, far be it from Abu Amir to deny thee his experience. It is many years since the recital of my sorrows hath passed over these lips, but fear not, O knight, that they will be revived by the tale, for not a single sun that spreadeth over the earth the best blessings of the perfect Allah, faileth to remind me of that light which having now set for ever, hath left my heart involved in hopeless gloom."

Bowing his head, the Moor covered his face with his hands for a few moments, then resumed his usual reclining posture, and thus commenced his history :—

“In thy distant land the fame of my house is unknown, but Spain can never forget the achievements of my ancestor, who aided the defence of Seville against the united forces of Ferdinand of Spain, and the traitor King of Granada,—the tribute payer, Muhammed Abu Alahmir ! But of what avail is even the devotion of heroes to a doomed race? Already do the princely towers of Granada pay homage to the Goth, and ere long the beauty of that city of delights, on which the lavish hand of taste hath squandered unbounded wealth, shall be coldly scanned by the unskilled eye of the barbarian, or perhaps left to moulder, deserted and unprized. Yes, it must be so ; daily does the sway of the Moor shrink back before the stern prowess of the Goth ; and if one—animated by the spirit of our fathers, who won this fair land—withstand for awhile the hosts of the foe, intestine discords, and distrusts, and jealousies invade our counsels, and neutralize the victories of our arms. Truly then do I say, that our race is doomed—ah yes, it is written !”

The Moor gravely stroked his flowing beard as he exclaimed, "So be it! Allah Akbar!—the name of Abu Amir will not be found in the list of the vanquished!

"Disgusted with Muhammed, whose submission to the Spaniard chafed his fiery spirit,—my ancestor, after the capture of Seville, disdained his proffered protection, and sought to forget the fair empire his race had founded in Europe. He died in the sterile region whence our people had their origin, but his descendants returned to Granada, and within its walls I drew the first breath of existence.

"I was the idolized child of my father's grey hairs, and the only one of a numerous family who escaped sickness or the sword. My tender parent feared to see my strength crushed like that of my brethren in the clash of warfare;—he kept me constantly by him, and trained my mind to a love of study, hoping thereby to save me from the passion for arms which had well-nigh destroyed my race. To those years of constant study, to those gentle

lessons, (made more precious by the lore of the sages of Arabia,) do I owe much that is good and evil in my destiny. My mind became refined and delicate; sensual pleasures possessed for me no charms, and in proportion as my heart admitted but few impressions, those which it received were indelible.

“My father died, bequeathing to me with great wealth, the experience of a life spent in calm observation and study.

“From him I had learned to perceive the ferocious perfidies of war,—the falseness of the dazzling hopes that lure to the giddy heights of power,—the treachery of courts,—the fickle breath of a nation's praise;—and he prayed with his dying breath that the child of his heart, and the last scion of his race, might spend his days in peaceful retirement.

“Yusef Abul Hagig had just succeeded to the throne of Granada, and ere the numerous expeditions which have since proved so unsuccessful had been projected, I left that voluptuous city,

for its cruelties to the wretched Christian captives filled me with horror. I was then in the prime of my youth; and allured hither by the fame of Dennis,—the father as well as the king of Portugal,—I chose for my future home this quiet valley, for in its breezes health is said to abide, and it rivals in fertility the fairest huertas of my native Andalusia.

“ Here, remembering the palaces of the Vega, where the emirs of Abul Hagig were vieing with each other in the display of their luxurious tastes—where stately groves overlook the very courts of the Alhambra, and delicious bowers are watered by the mingled waves of the Xenil and the Darrow,—fancying too that yon high and distant mountain bears some resemblance to the snowy summit of the Sierra Nevada, which cools the airs of Granada;—here I determined to abide, and gathering around me every pleasure that could charm the heart of sanguine youth, forget that treachery and grief and impending ruin still menaced the children of Yemen.

“ Having first discovered a spring sufficiently sweet and cool to satisfy the fastidiousness of Moorish habits, and so abundant and perpetual as to ensure the constant play of the indispensable fountains,—my quinta was commenced.

“ I watched its progress with delight, and spared no expense in its erection and embellishment ;—it was finished,—and with a triumphant heart I took possession of a dwelling dear to me because the creation of my own mind. Kindred I had none,—incessant wars and their inseparable griefs had left me the last of my race ; but a few favourite companions helped me to hasten the fleeting hours with music and feasting and revelry. My spirits were buoyant with the thoughtless gaiety of undisciplined youth ; and my actions, now entirely uncontrolled, were capricious as the vagrant wind.

“ One day as I rode forth accompanied by two of my friends, my fiery steed (a creature reared by the children of the desert, and of unrivalled beauty) grew impatient of control, and springing

from the touch of the spur, rushed amidst an encampment of wanderers who were resting in the valley. I knew them to belong to a strange tribe of vagrants who had recently appeared from the east, calling themselves Rommany,—but generally known as Gitani, or Egyptians. Ere I could extricate my impetuous barb from their encampment, some damage was done to their wretched provender, and one of their race was overturned. Ere I could offer atonement for the mischance, the hound whom my Arabian had struck, suddenly arose, and growling a malignant curse, revealed the most hideous deformity of feature that ever disgraced humanity. One of my thoughtless companions declared that I had ‘unearthed a goule,’ and ambling round the spot, pretended to look for the stolen tenant of the charnel-house. Had he been indeed one of those fierce and malignant spirits, he could not have glared on us with more intense malice; and heedless of his feelings, I joined in the derision with which my friends re-

garded the monstrous deformity. But my mood was soon changed,—with the rapidity of lightning the loathly being drew a broad knife from his girdle, and buried it in the breast of my noble steed. I was now frantic with rage, and in the anguish of the moment felled the vile slave to the earth. I believe I should have slain him, but his tribe dragged him away, whilst one of my companions dismounting, they forced me on his horse and brought me hither. Days passed ere the harsh voice of the Gitano ceased to sound in mine ear, growling his dark threats of revenge; yet I thought less of the menaces of the wretched and hideous outcast, than of the loss of my gallant barb.

“Time, however, aided by my gay companions, weakened the stinging remembrance, and an event which occurred the following spring completely effaced it. My presence was required at Granada, and during my sojourn there, a blest accident which it is needless to relate, revealed to

me a glimpse of one who was to me as the dawn of a new existence.

I dare not dwell on those scenes, for in only alluding to them I behold my Amine in all the freshness and purity of her sylph-like loveliness. In secret I wooed my beautiful Peri!—from the gardens of her zenana, the strains of my lute arose to her bower, and the starry hosts that witnessed our vows were not more heavenly than the gentle glance of my beloved! But though formed after the model of a *hourî* of the promised paradise, the charms of Amine were not confined to her beauteous form. An expression of reflective sweetness gave dignity to her countenance, and a retiring delicacy, which is usually unknown to our voluptuously reared beauties, mingled in my love as much of reverence as passion, and rendered my fastidious heart irrevocably hers. Never was her angelic voice attuned to the soft lays of an enervating luxury; never were her graceful limbs enwreathed in the mazes of the dance; but on her lips hung

the wisdom of the sages, and having listened to her gentle converse, my mind resumed its thirst after wisdom, and the gay associates who had ruled me since my father's death lost the power to please.

“ Convinced that I was beloved, I formally treated with the proud sire of Amine for the gift of his beauteous child. He knew not that I had beheld her, but considered my family and riches, and bestowed on me a treasure far surpassing the wealth of worlds.

“ On obtaining his promise, I returned to my quinta, and hastily fitted yon wing of this dwelling for my bride. Yes, and hither I brought her,—too proud, too happy ! O Allah ! why was I permitted to taste more than mortal happiness, since the cup of woe was so soon to follow ? Had I only known the sorrows of life, they had been easily borne ; but contrasted with those sunny hours, my spirit quails beneath the rod. But alas ! it was written !

“ How many blissful months passed away, I

know not—I missed them not as they fled, and since then I measure not my lost happiness by days or hours !

“ Twice, I remember, winter had laid his hand lightly on our changing groves,—our Azayda had opened her starry eyes to the light, and our boy—the delight of our happy existence—our gallant, merry first-born, had just begun with lisping tongue to mimic our words of love. It was a bright morning in autumn, and the sun had not long looked on the heavy dews, when my Amine with her little ones, attended by slaves, were in the garden of her mirador. I was just leaving the bath to join them, when a scream—O Allah, I hear it now ! so piercing ! so wild !—I rushed into the garden, and beheld clinging to the branches of a tall cedar, (it has long since been rooted from the spot,) the grinning visage of the hideous Gitano. He gazed on me with the exultant laugh of a triumphant fiend, and then flung himself beyond the enclosure and disappeared. O Allah ! the scene that awaited me !

“There, on the embowered walk, lay my beloved,—pale and motionless as the sculptured marble, and clasped to her bosom our first-born, our only son. The sanguine tide of life was gushing over the innocent lips of our murdered boy, and its crimson stream deluged the unconscious bosom of his hapless mother! Happy unconsciousness! Alas! to my aid oblivion hath yet to come!”

The deep agony of the father overcame the stern resolve of Abu Amir, and as he pressed his hands over the swollen veins of his hot brow, and across his tearless eyes, the Christian knight shamed not to find his tunic wet with the tears that had unconsciously fallen on his own bosom. The Moor struggled with his emotion, and at length by a powerful effort resumed his story.

“I have little more to add,—ere Amine reopened her eyes we had removed from her every dark witness of her child’s death, and strove to break to her by slow degrees the fearful truth;

but memory was busy,—and though she checked not our innocent artifices, she was but too conscious of her irreparable loss. For my sake indeed she strove to be cheerful,—again she smiled,—sweetly—brightly as ever; but the heart of the doting mother was broken. Notwithstanding her efforts to lessen my anguish, she drooped from day to day.—I knew that, alas! she only smiled when I was regarding her with beseeching eyes,—and felt that the treasure and light of my existence was leaving me for ever. Too well-founded were my fears,—ere spring returned the mother and her murdered child reposed in the same grave.

“One wild desire sustained me through this dreadful trial, one burning wish reigned in my heart in place of that gentle passion which had attuned to sweetest harmony every impulse of my soul. To avenge this deadly wrong,—to visit on the wretch who spread this fell ruin over my home, the full measure of my vengeance,—to

rid the earth of a loathsome villain for whose malignant mind the sole comparison is his fiend-like form ! But all my efforts to trace the monster have been in vain,—and the exertions made by the Christian rulers alike fruitless. Years have rolled by, and though often a rumour that seemed to point him out, has led me into distant provinces, disappointment has been the result of all my labours. But I do not yet despair,—and here, alone and ever watchful, I await the moment which shall at length satisfy that last wish of my heart. Meanwhile the revived studies of my youth, and the guardianship of my remaining child, are my sole occupations, and solitude and silence my sole companions. Of my numerous followers, I have retained but very few,—these know my moods, and carefully preserve the quiet so dear to me. Stranger, my tale is done.”

As the Moor concluded his history, De Lacy averted his face, that he might not witness the

anguish indicated by his faint and broken tones. After a pause, he turned to thank Abu Amir for his piteous story ; but his host had with noiseless step departed.

END OF VOL. II.



